

THE GRANDEUR

OF

JOBB

GEORGE T. DICKINSON



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

George T. Dickinson is an avid student of deserts, having studied their history and natural features (mostly in California) for many years. He has studied geology academically, and collects rocks and minerals as one of his hobbies (others include walking and swimming).

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Other books to the author's credit are *Hidden Patterns* and *the Grand Design* and *Splendor of the Song of Solomon*.

ABOUT THE BOOK

The book of Job has been a treasure mine for Bible students for centuries. While to the nominal Christian the

name of Job is synonymous with patience, the more serious student recognizes the book is much more valuable as an investigation into the reason for suffering, why the wicked are allowed to flourish, and what God's plan is to resolve it all. Further, the book of Job does not put forth pat answers to these questions. In form largely poetic, quick glimpses into the divine plan leave plenty of room for analyzing, amalgamating, and applying of broad principles to specific situations.

In *The Grandeur of Job* the author blends a personal knowledge of the ways of deserts, such as Job must have lived in, with an equally personal knowledge of the ways of human beings, especially those who have known suffering and hardships firsthand. A series of vignettes, or "mini-biographies," helps to illustrate the relevancy of the message of Job to the generation of today.



**THE GRANDEUR
OF JOB**
The Sage of Uz

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G. T. Dickinson

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Introducing the Great Dilemma

“After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.”

The remarkable thing about this amazing man in the Old Testament is in the meaning of what Job said for men living today. The significance of Job can have a powerful impact upon every person, no matter when or where he lives.

If you wonder why some things happen, let Job draw aside the curtain and you can see an infinitely good purpose. Actually Job is strikingly modern; the book can revolutionize the lives of men today, deeply affecting their reaction to some of the baffling problems of life. This magnificent poetic masterpiece is one of the most sublime and encouraging pieces of literature you will ever read.

The book deals with the universal problem of suffering and misfortune, and shows a man triumphing over personal disaster. The essence of its pervasive philosophy is the sublimity of patience and the final triumph of good over evil.

And what about the unique book itself? There are mysteries, even some problems, involved. Is it an authentic document of inspiration that can be accepted without reservations from the traditional Christian viewpoint? Moreover, how does it fit into a man's daily needs and the challenges of life?

The first two chapters and the last ten verses of this astonishing book are prose; the rest is poetic—on a grand scale that propounds the ultimate goodness and justice of God, including

the eternal happiness of those who serve Him. Possibly no other book in Scripture has created more differences of opinion as to the author, the time, Job's country and religion, and even the work's authenticity and message, but we need not be in doubt. Moses wrote the book of Job while he was an exile in Midian. Ellen White states that "under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he [Moses] wrote . . . the book of Job" (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1140). Job was a citizen of Uz, a fertile spot in the Arabian Desert; he was a man of distinction, honor, wealth, and great integrity, indeed one of history's majestic figures.

Some scholars talk about the exegetical difficulties of Job. The man himself was thrown into a most unusual dilemma. But more than anything else, the painful experience of Job can provide every man with a vast treasury of truth and personal experience.

The great debate recorded in the book of Job deals with the overwhelmingly important question of man. Nothing is more vital than knowing what man really is. The book of Job enlightens us. It is a piece of sublime literature that certainly should be better known and properly understood.

Job was, beyond doubt, one of the most remarkable men who ever lived. His grandeur shines like a diamond amid the dilemma of a great personal crisis. The book is unique, challenging, authentic, and dramatically relevant.

“The Fire of God Is Fallen”

THAT BLAZING TEMPER isn't helping you; in fact, it could give you ulcers someday.

Impatience, anxiety, anger, as well as other emotional upsets, bother most people; they often do not know how to cope with their problems. James, the disciple of Jesus, cites Job as an example of how a man acquires the rare grace of patience. “Behold, we count them happy which endure,” he writes. “Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (James 5:11).

For a while it must have been difficult for Job to comprehend the pity and tender mercy of God when he was plunged by the acquiescence of the divine will into a caldron of boiling anguish. But, as James said, he patiently endured until time made everything clear.

This is how the great epic begins: “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.”

His vast possessions made him one of the wealthiest men in that part of the world. The scene as the drama opens was one of domestic tranquillity, prosperity, and spiritual integrity. But a dark cloud began to gather over this contented human landscape when the adversary approached God with a complaint.

The sons of God (angels) presented themselves before the

Lord and Satan came also. This would indicate he had access at some unknown place to the divine Presence. After God pointed to Job as a prize exhibit of what a man can become, Satan accused the Lord of favoritism and special protection. Touch his possessions and "he will curse thee to thy face," contended Satan.

So the devil was allowed to vent his diabolical rage on Job.

Lone messengers arrived at Job's headquarters to announce dire calamities. Marauders had slain or stolen his large herds. "The fire of God is fallen from heaven," said one messenger, "and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, . . . and I only am escaped" (Job 1:16).

A great wind struck the house where his seven sons and three daughters were feasting; it collapsed and all perished in the ruins.

The reaction of Job to these disasters was indicative of the man: "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped."

Instead of clenching his fist in grim defiance and blaming God, he prayed in submission. He could suffer these heart-crushing losses and still say, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

The inspired comment on this magnificent performance by a prince of sufferers is summed up in one simple line: "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

Here stood a heroic figure upon whom, according to the opinion of many, "the fire of God is fallen from heaven." Satan alone brought the fire, but men didn't see it that way. Job had suffered God's displeasure for some concealed sin, they reasoned. But this cruel judgment did not crush the heart of the man who loved God above everything else. Thus far he had frustrated the stratagem of Satan who now raged in fury over his broken darts.

So another day came when the adversary complained again. Harking back to his charge in the original rebellion, he brazenly accused God of acting unfairly. Desperately he labored the argument that God was sheltering His favorite. Cynically he ac-

cused Job of ulterior motives. It was an argument he planned to spread abroad in the earth: no one can live up to the claim God has made about the high moral standard of Job.

"The man isn't all that good—God is making claims that cannot be substantiated," one can imagine him saying to his evil compatriates.

So he boldly and defiantly addressed God. "But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face."

God gave Satan permission to practice his dark arts. All the fury of hell broke loose upon the unhappy man. Misery followed upon the heels of misery. Pain compounded tore his body apart. Agonizing boils broke out all over, from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.

Appalled at the fearful sight, his wife gave up in utter dismay. "Dost thou still retain thine integrity?" she cried. "Curse God, and die!"

His answer served as a reliable indicator of the deep integrity that marked this most remarkable man. "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women," he rebuked her. "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Came now Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Their remarks constitute an essential part of the ensuing dialog that gives the book a unique and challenging flavor, producing also what is probably one of the most significant debates in all recorded history.

Upon seeing the pitiable man distorted by such keen suffering, they scarcely recognized him. Weeping, they rent their garments in a display of amazement and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat down on the ground and in an extreme gesture of profound sorrow remained silent for seven whole days.

I was reminded of Job when the Arthur L. Dale family recounted the unusual series of troubles that suddenly struck them. Instead of dwelling on their trials, they wanted to recount the way God brought things together after several crushing blows.

First they gave a recital of the motorcycle accident that

landed their two college-age sons, Louis and Elmer, in the hospital, severely injured. Unconscious for an entire week, Louis battled for life and remained hospitalized for ninety days, his body fearfully mangled.

"All our neighbors were Roman Catholic," said Mrs. Dale, a Seventh-day Adventist, "but for days they supplied us with food and joined their prayers with the thousands of Adventist prayers offered for the boys' recovery."

"Today both boys are completely recovered," said Arthur Dale, who looked upon their healing as a miracle.

Six months after the cycle mishap, Warren, their oldest son, opened the radiator cap of an overheated car near Cajon Pass, California. A jet of steam scalded his face with horrifying results.

A companion brought him to a friend in San Bernardino. She fled from the door when she first saw his face. Quickly she recovered and rushed him to the hospital. There another friend, a physician, happened to be present at that unusual hour.

"We had nothing to look forward to but a long series of skin transplants," said Arthur Dale, "but we and others prayed for another miracle."

After several days the doctor examined Warren's face and exclaimed, "A miracle has happened! No operation will be necessary."

Two months later, Ina, the teen-age daughter, suffered a concussion. "They've each had a calamity," said Mrs. Dale, "all within a period of eight months."

"But in spite of good recoveries each time, you must have passed through many days of great apprehension," I posed.

"I know something of how Job felt," replied Arthur Dale.

Ina and Elmer, the two children at home at the time we were there, told how they felt God had blessed the whole family during their time of trouble.

"We can now believe that the dark night is over and bright days are ahead," I remarked.

"The Lord takes care of us," answered Arthur. "We have learned to be patient, trust God, and not worry about the future."

This is just about the way Job put it to his wife when she lost faith. "We receive good at the hand of God. Shall we not receive evil?" In other words, do not lose confidence or yield to impatience when faith is tried and troubles multiply like the dark clouds of a thunderstorm.

Paul summed it up this way:

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:35-37).

This is exactly how Job reacted. It also reflects the response of the Arthur Dales to their troubles. It's a good formula for everyone.

“The Blast of God”

TROUBLE BEGETS TROUBLE.

In *The Promised Land* (Houghton Mifflin, 1912) Mary Antin told the story of her life, first in Czarist Russia and then in the United States. She had happy days and troubled days.

“After my mother took to her bed everything went wrong,” she wrote. Business declined, doctor bills could not be paid. The father worried about the mother until he became sick. Her sister, overworked after the servants were dismissed, fell sick. The baby developed an irritable spirit from neglect. “And by way of a climax, the old cow took it into her head to kick my grandmother.”

After a number of eventful years and many troubles she found a new life in America. The book ends with these words: “This is my latest home, and it invites me to a glad new life. . . . A new rhythm dances in my veins. . . . Mine is the whole majestic past, and mine is the shining future.”

In some respects that is like the life of Job (and by the same measure, the lives of most people). Job had its shaded days—they were dark, stormy ones—but eventually, better times came to crown the life of the trusting, patient Uzite. Yet to Job, during the troubled days it seemed the better he lived the more he suffered. For a long time he could not fathom this dark mystery of life.

In the third chapter he laments life itself, wishing he had

never been born and then lauds the desirability, even the beauty, of death. Who would want to live in the misery he was passing through?

"Let the day perish wherein I was born." Job was careful not to blame God. He cursed the day of his birth, calling it darkness, and implored the shadow of death to stain it. But the deep sensitivity of his soul would allow no blasphemous word reproaching the Deity to escape his lips. That was the one thing he would not do no matter what happened.

In poetic verse he described the unhappy day of his birth: "Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light, but have none; neither let it see the dawning of the day." The Hebrew text uses the picturesque idiom "the eyelids of the morning."

Others have also said, "I wish I had never been born." Probably most men at some low moment have harbored the dire thought. But no one was ever more excusable than Job. He had reached a point where the human spirit simply could go no further. In one blinding flash after another all of his vast possessions evaporated and he found himself destitute. He had a deep love for his gifted children and could be immensely proud of them, but now they were gone—their lives extinguished in one crushing blow. To despair of life under such circumstances seems excusable and apparently God took this into account.

Some people bring trouble upon themselves. But Job's dilemma was not of his own making. He lived in a manner that should have ensured prosperity and a reasonable measure of happiness, at least within the bounds of human experience. Very likely he thought of this and it only increased the agony of his tortured mind.

So he passed from lamenting the day of his birth to lauding the day of his death. "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest," he said. The animated dust of pride and fame mixes with the common clay. The mighty and the humble fall together with impartial steps as proud death summons the prince and the pauper alike. "The small and great are there" the sage of Uz informs us, "and the servant is free from his master."

Some thought death a grisly thing and surrounded it, as men often do today, with a conspiracy of silence. But Job thought better of it. Like the breaking of a fiddle string, it would snap the delicate cord of his tortured life and end this bitter episode of human misery. Thus his covered rendezvous with death would bring him into a sweet fullness. "Wherefore," he claims, "is light given to him that is in misery, and life [the resurrection hope] unto the bitter in soul?"

Centuries later Euripides echoed a similar sentiment: "Account ye no man happy till he die."

Job was perhaps the first—and some think the grandest—of the great philosophers. What he said about death deserves careful study. He seemed to hear the haughty cry of the grim gatekeeper and measured the true dimensions of his irresistible summons.

"Come," called the authoritarian voice out of the dark chamber of the tomb.

"Go," said the tortured spirit within him.

"Wait awhile," came a gentle voice.

Job never heard the words but he didn't need to hear. God, behind the scenes, controlled things, and the course of events was falling into line as though in response to a mighty edict of divine wisdom.

Job now needed the delicate touch of an understanding friend but the three who sat before him gave none. Instead, the eyes of the first to speak fastened upon him like a pair of meat hooks. Eliphaz, the Temanite, decided that Job had said enough.

He may have reasoned within himself: Something is wrong with this man and it's time for me to set him straight. What he said in effect as chapter four opens was this: "Don't get offended at what I'm about to say—it's only for your good that I say it."

Eliphaz paused, looked at his two companions, who nodded approval, and then gave further vent to his indignation.

"I can't keep silent any longer."

Job curiously eyed the speaker. It seemed a strange way for an old friend to start comforting someone in deep sorrow. He had just poured out his pent-up frustrations and was beginning to feel a little better but his friend's talk set him back.

"You have been a tower of strength to the weak and needy," the Temanite indicated, but now "calamity is come upon you and all your good works are of no avail."

All three of Job's comforters were convinced he was hiding something that must be confessed in order to appease the wrath of God.

"Who ever perished, being innocent?" Eliphaz insinuated. "Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish."

Job was perplexed and confused to hear his friend talk this way. The Temanite intended to help Job by getting him to disclose the secret evils he suspected, but the suffering man could think of no grounds for anyone to assume such dire suspicions.

Moreover, Eliphaz spoke with the authority of one who had been allowed to see a mysterious revelation. At some time in the past, while asleep, he heard a voice:

" " " Can mortal man be righteous before God?

Can a man be pure before his Maker?

Even in his servants he puts no trust,
and his angels he charges with error;

how much more those who dwell in houses of clay""

(Job 4:17-19, R.S.V.).

In other words, if God did not trust the angels who fell with Lucifer from heaven, how could a person like Job expect divine favors?

But God's ways are not man's ways. He often works in a manner that is contrary to man's expectations—as in the case of Job. His friends were sure something was drastically wrong but the Lord did not look at it in the same light. Trial, suffering, and disaster conform to a divine purpose that always becomes clear in due time.

A young couple I knew, a doctor and his wife, had to stand by helplessly while their two babies died. One year after the baby girl passed away, an infant son, whom the father desperately wanted to live, died also. "We all prayed together and then each time watched the spark of life go out as the babies lay in incubators at the hospital. These were severe blows to all of us. Yet we can see some good in the whole unhappy episode."

Soon after the death of the baby boy the parents decided to adopt a child. The one they arranged for was born with an apparent minor defect. Should they take him? At first they decided against the adoption but the wife's heart went out to the little tyke.

"No one else will take him," she told her husband.

So they adopted him out of sheer love. Today he is a strong, vigorous, intelligent child. He would not have grown up in that Christian home had not the tragedy of death taken the two babies.

This doctor and his wife have since adopted two other children, who share a home that can cheer anyone's heart. Some—Eliphaz for instance—would call their tragedy the blast of God. But such is not the case. In reality, according to the book of Job, it is the blast of Satan.

But the gentle winds of God blow over the crushed and bleeding scene until there rises a spectacle of sublime purpose, a happy ending to a day of confusion and terror.

The past then fits into a majestic temple squared by the chisels and hammers of Providence. Patience and faith frame a shining future for all of God's trusting, believing children.

The blast and fury of devilish rage struck Job a staggering blow. But an element of iron flowed in his blood. And above the clouds, all-good, all-wise God held the providential lines that like threads of finest gold connect earth and heaven.

“As the Sparks Fly Upward”

A TACTFUL, SYMPATHETIC friend is one thing. A tactless, indelicate, self-appointed comforter is something else. Nobody seems to know exactly how to take him. Even his friends are baffled. The wisdom of Job's comforters was open to question although much of what they said could not be denied nor refuted.

Job had been launched, unknown to himself and certainly unrecognized by his friends, on an incomparable adventure in life. Storms and wild waves beset his boat of destiny.

The fifth chapter opens with a rather cynical question that Eliphaz cast at Job. In substance this is what he said:

“Do you think anyone is going to believe your story?”—inconsiderate and challenging, to say the least.

“Call now, if there be any that will answer thee [the inference is, even God]; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?”

“I've seen foolish men like you, who won't acknowledge their errors, take root and prosper, but suddenly they are cursed,” is what the Temanite seemed to say.

Then came a cruel reference to the tragedy of Job's sons and daughters: “His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them” (Job 5:4). The implication is that his faults were responsible for all of this divine displeasure.

“Job, if you had been living right, the robber would not

have swallowed up all your substance," pontificates the over-pious Temanite.

"Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (5:7), observed Job's discerning judge. You cannot stop sparks from flying out and up when iron is struck a hard blow, nor can any man avoid trouble. If Eliphaz had stopped here, he would qualify for commendation, but he, like others of his day, was completely immersed in the mistaken idea that trouble is a sure indication of man's guilt and God's wrath.

Eliphaz went on to acknowledge God's wonderful ways—something neither he nor Job, at that time, realized that the Lord was actually doing in the life of the troubled man: "Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number" (5:9).

Half of Job's anxieties would have vanished if he had really grasped this sublime fact. Yet that was precisely the intent of God. The dark mysterious days almost crushed him but he patiently endured, knowing that in this particular thing Eliphaz was absolutely right. Centuries later Paul cited the same golden gleam in 1 Corinthians 10:13:

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

So let the sparks fly. It is proof that something has struck iron; and iron is what a man needs in his soul.

"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
Whilst others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?

.

"Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord;
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy Word."

—ISAAC WATTS

Eliphaz could easily switch from the ridiculous to the sublime. After denouncing Job for failure to live up to his high

profession, and thereby suffering the frown of the Divine, he elicited thoughts that belong to the wisdom of the ages.

"Behold, happy is the man whom God reproves; therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he binds up; he smites, but his hands heal. He will deliver you from six troubles; in seven there shall no evil touch you. In famine he will redeem you from death, and in war from the power of the sword. You shall be hid from the scourge of the tongue, and shall not fear destruction when it comes' " (Job 5:17-21, R.S.V.).

The marvelous beauty of these words were lost for the moment on the ears of Job because they intended to say this all would have happened to him if he was the right kind of a man.

"Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it . . . for thy good" (5:27). So these wise men, who knew it all, carried on: "Job, these words of ours may sound severe, but we have looked into your case and after careful consideration our conclusion is that all this is needed for your own good."

Job did not respond by angrily denouncing his faultfinding friends; instead he again stated the depth of his suffering. "Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up" (6:2, 3).

He, like his friends, feels the displeasure of God: "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me." Dipped in poison, these arrows drink up his spirit. Once more he longs for death to end his misery. He has requested God to take his life but he lives on.

Pathetically Job called for his friends to understand and not judge: "To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend" (6:14).

Such friends as they are, he points out, are like the ephemeral brooks of the country. During the spring rains they run full but when the dry, hot months come, they vanish. Fair-weather (or spring-shower) friends are never dependable, Job implies; they run dry when adversity strikes.

One is inclined to see these selfsame friends in the halcyon days before God's wrath fell upon him, lauding his fame and

glory, showering him with praise and telling the world what a great man he was.

The difference between the friendship of God—One who never fails—and these intermittent friends who had run dry, is a matter for all to ponder. The faithful sage still held on to God even though he felt himself under the shadow of divine displeasure. As for his sad-comforting friends, "they go to nothing."

Moreover, Job went on to evaluate Eliphaz: "Ye dig a pit for your friend" (6:27).

"Is there iniquity in my tongue?" asked Job, latching on to some measure of comforting self-justification.

That tongue, though pouring out bitter complaints about his suffering, still honored God, even though his friends sought to overwhelm him with a strong implication of the Lord's complicity in his agony and pain.

The same faith can be seen in the experience of a television personality named Clint Walker. Prostrate on the snow after a freak accident, he said to himself, "I'm in real trouble." As he lay there the thought flashed into his mind that only God could save him.

Today he is certain that God really did save his life after the point of a ski pole pierced his heart.

Walker, a rugged outdoor type, played a leading role in the once popular "Cheyenne" television serials. But nothing in the scenes he portrayed equaled the drama of his actual brush with death in real life.

Speeding down a slope, he fell and the ski pole went handle-end into the snow ahead of him. Like a spear, the sharp end drove straight into his body as he fell upon it, piercing a ventricle of his heart. It was a once-in-a-million accident. He quickly realized that his chances to live were very slim indeed.

That was when he called upon God to save him.

When the ambulance reached the hospital in Bishop, California, forty-five miles from the scene, two hours later, Walker's pulse and blood pressure were down to almost zero.

Drs. David Sheldon and George Brown, recognizing that possibly only seconds remained, began open-heart surgery at

once. They felt that for all practical purposes he was already a dead man, but no conscientious doctor gives up when even a dim spark of life remains.

Though the doctors were able to put the heart back into action, they felt that permanent brain damage was inevitable. But after ten days the six-and-a-half-foot actor, 44 years of age, left the hospital without apparent damage of any kind.

Said Dr. Sheldon to Walker, as quoted in the *San Diego Union*: "I still don't understand why you're still here. I can't take credit for it. It was a hundred-to-one shot you'd come out of this."

Clint Walker has the answer: he asked God to save him when he realized nothing else, even the best of medical skill, could do it. This and this alone, he is convinced, pulled him through when the spark of life almost went out.

Job and Clint Walker were far removed from each other in many respects but both were recipients of God's compassion. All of God's children receive divine favors in one way or another. Every man is a candidate for such celestial attention. The sparks fly upward and the endless mercies of God fall downward upon His troubled children.

An Appointed Time Upon the Earth

DURING THE PERIOD of Job's great dilemma, one recurring question arose in the minds of everyone who knew him: Why is God punishing him?

Troubled people often ask the same question about themselves. Or it comes with a slight variation: Why does God allow all this to happen to me?

The story of Job is so unique, so human, so meaningful for everyone that it needs retelling.

The seventh chapter begins with a significant question propounded by Job: "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?"

Wearisome nights stretch on for months; he tosses to and fro as relentless pain gives rise to insomnia. Worms gather about the unhealed sores; his broken skin becomes loathsome and he despairs of ever seeing the end of his affliction. Again he speaks of death—it becomes a preoccupation with him.

"He that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more." Who would want to live when life holds such misery?

About halfway through the seventh chapter Job directs his words toward Heaven—perhaps a dramatic interlude in the dialog or possibly a prayer the author injects at this point. "I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself?" (Job 7:20).

Job's bitter experience of suffering, pain, and criticism reveals a giant of patient endurance; the vigor of his faith, his natural goodness, shine through the hideous guises of the great test.

Pure crystal skies hung overhead like an azure panoply covering the treeless plains and the crimson sunburned mountains. The wild horizons suggested rugged strength hidden in a virgin wilderness devoid of man or beast. Men could look upon the robust landscape and find sheer bliss in the scene of primitive beauty or draw courage from the hard, bare pinnacles that punctuated the horizon.

But now everything was distorted in his mind. His native mountains, once so reassuring, seemed to mock him. What unseen terrors lurked behind those brown ragged walls? A harmless lizard darted from a weather-beaten rock. The sudden movement startled Job and for a moment he thought of some deadly snake.

"Thou scarest me with dreams . . . : my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life," he tells God.

Yet the Uzite is still talking to his Maker. His wife, overcome by the horror of the agonizing events, has long since fled to some secluded place. The natural sympathy of his friends has turned to perverted thinking in the presence of such repulsive blemishes. But he keeps his face directed toward the cloudless skies.

"What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?" (7:17).

The burnished sky hung empty over his upturned face. But he still had faith enough to pray into the empty space through which he could not see. Probably not a single bird flapped its wings in the vacant immensity above his head, yet he believed the God of all creation lived far away up there beyond the mysterious blue.

In his soul Job felt he could hear a whisper from the far-off place. Maybe there would be a little hole in the vast ethereal ocean and a crystal shaft of light bringing the glory of the majestic Voice he longed to hear, an end, too, of his distressing isolation.

Perhaps God heard. Did He? The confusion of Job's mind did not let him think clearly. In any case he would continue to pray or simply to sit in dumb silence before the Infinite.

But then he saw the grim, silent faces of his friends. Eliphaz had spoken. It was a torrent of profound words but what sense did they make in his condition?

"What better sense will Bildad, the Shuhite, make?" he asked himself.

"You're not listening," he suddenly spoke, accusing them of callous indifference.

Sensing that all three were obsessed with their preconceived opinions and that his words only passed over their heads, he startled them by this mild rebuke for their strange insensitivity.

Bildad, possibly annoyed by the remark, reacted with a counter charge. "How long wilt thou speak these things? and how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind?"

Job listened patiently. From the start he could see the Shuhite would be no more sympathetic than the first speaker.

"Doth God pervert judgment?"

Of course not. Then it is as plain as day that something is wrong with the entire Job family. He pointed to the deceased children, strongly inferring that God cast them away for their transgressions and Job's own unworthiness.

The abrasive talk went on with a big cynical "if" leveled at the broken Uzite. "If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous" (8:6).

"Repent, Job, repent. Make a clean breast of things," seems to be what his friends were saying. Possibly they had a sincere desire to see him back on the right track again. But how they went about it!

The statements of Bildad seem somewhat ambiguous on the question of Job's future, for chapter eight closes with a bright forecast. Probably the inference is that his future will be like this if he sets in order what little is left of his broken life.

"Behold, God will not reject a blameless man, nor take the hand of evildoers. He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with shouting. Those who hate you will be

clothed with shame, and the tent of the wicked will be no more' " (8:20-22, R.S.V.).

Job's bright story of human fortitude shines amid the misdirected attacks by professed friends; his courage and patience make him the wonder of the ages.

It seems almost incredible that friends would act like Job's opinionated comforters. Some critics have even branded the entire book as unrealistic and a figment of poetic fancy. But let us remember the dialog element and the modes of discussion in different times and places. Without doubt the encounter took place. There were extended discussions on each side couched in profound terms and brilliant expressions. Moses, the author, took a well-known incident and under the illumination of inspiration elaborated it into this rare gem of literature.

Three primary objectives prevail throughout the book. One refutes a basic theological error that trouble is a direct expression of divine disfavor. Second, men are being prepared for eternal life under circumstances involving severe trial and conflict. Finally, the good man triumphs, though many rough deserts must be crossed.

Quite different from the religious atmosphere of Job is the rise from adverse circumstances of General Daniel James, which demonstrated the final triumph of certain principles basic to the human race.

One of four black generals in the United States military up to the time of his appointment as an Air Force brigadier general, James was an outstanding pilot. He had grown up in an environment of radical racial discrimination. To many blacks—and whites—the discrimination seemed as unjust as the attitude of Job's friends. Yet Daniel, the youngest child in a family of seventeen children, did not let obstacles or attitudes embitter him.

"Oh, I did get angry at times, sure," he said in a newspaper interview. "I felt the rebuffs of the signs that said 'colored' and 'white' on the water fountains, and because of this I'd never drink water downtown."

Daniel James, however, didn't allow that to turn him into an angry young man with no place to go.

"I wanted to accomplish something."

In Pensacola, Florida, where James grew up, the planes at the big Navy air training base attracted him. But back in those days blacks were not accepted as pilots. Instead of saying, "Well, if that's the way you feel, go and fly your silly airplanes," he tackled the problem by a neat military maneuver. Avoiding a head-on, bitter, bone-crushing frontal encounter, he made a flanking attack. After graduating at Tuskegee Institute, he obtained a civilian license and set out to reach his goal.

He managed to become a civilian instructor in the Army Air Corps and did the job with distinction. Later the times changed; he was allowed to join the corps and begin his climb to prominence. Finally, he was appointed deputy assistant secretary of defense, a post that put him third in rank among top officers of the public affairs division of the Pentagon.

Through it all James had many unpleasant experiences in the service, but he countered these with a philosophy and resolution that enabled him to climb the ladder toward recognition.

He attributes much of his success to his parents. "They were strong patriots, who had less reason to keep the faith then than now. My mother . . . used to say, 'Don't be a part of the problem. Always contribute to the solution.'"

Through slights and insults he pressed on, never allowing himself the luxury of self-pity. "I have never been discouraged," says he, "or encountered any obstacle in the Air Force that I haven't been able to overcome."

The general doesn't take a negative or defeatist attitude toward society in general. "I'm a member of the Establishment and proud of it—and I mean established order and established justice within the law."

He refers to his accomplishment as an example of how a person can in due time reach his goal in spite of trouble if he strives hard enough.

"It puts a lie," he says, "to the stories that you can't make it if you happen to be a member of a minority group or come from certain sections of the country. It's not as easy to make it with these handicaps, but I do say that in America everything is possible."

Job pre-eminently, and General James to a lesser yet admirable degree, demonstrate the strength of the human instinct to survive. Both were anchored to great ideals. With General James it was largely patriotism; in Job's case faith in God provided the element of ultimate strength. Early training stayed with each through life and neither allowed unfair or difficult situations to embitter him.

Job's record shows that when a man's appointed time comes the human spirit can rise to the occasion if he is properly equipped.

The Mover of Mountains

A RECKLESS ANT nipped Job's sandaled foot and he crushed it, a mild scowl registering on his face.

The flood of troubles confused him but the talk of his friends proved positively frustrating. His penetrating eyes wandered from one face to another of the three men.

In a gesture expressive of supreme disgust Job lifted his right hand and then let it fall limp upon his lap.

"I know it is so of a truth."

No one could gainsay the last words of Bildad. But the way he had linked the obvious truth with the error of an unsound deduction displeased Job.

"But how," Job went on, "should man be just with God?"

These critics were accusing him of error but they had nothing to offer. It's easy to accuse someone of wrong but proving the charge is another matter, especially when the person is as basically invulnerable as Job. Instead of arguing the point, he extolled the might and wisdom of God.

He it is who removes the mountains. How then can any man begin to measure His power and wisdom?

He shakes the earth, spreads out the heavens in their star-studded glory, and governs the boundless sea. Who can hinder Him or say, "Why are You doing this?" Instead of reasoning with God, Job said he "would make supplication" and thus entreat divine favor.

Bildad stiffened but the others were listening attentively so he suppressed an impulse to speak. Job continued his remarks uninterrupted, according to the rule of this game of wits they were playing. Yet it amounted to far more than a mere game. Some great principles were being thrashed out there amid the sun-drenched hills of the desert and each man put his whole soul into the momentous dialog.

The extended discussions were animated, intense, and in the end very fruitful for posterity. Moses must have realized the vital truths involved when he put this fervent encounter into a dramatic poem.

Amid a recitation of his personal calamities, the poem has Job inserting a declaration of God's unlimited power. "If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong" (Job 9:19).

Yes, God is strong. But the question uppermost in the minds of all four men that day was how strong would He be when it came to the desperate needs of Job. The mistreated man felt humble about himself, for he said that even if he should claim to be perfect, his mouth would condemn him. Yet there must be hope, for God takes all men into His reckoning. Therefore, only one conclusion could be reached—the good and the bad must alike suffer. In this world the perfect and the wicked perish together.

Job, exasperated by the accusing fingers of friends, nonetheless felt guilty and condemned in his own mind. Some abrasive questions bothered him. Does God laugh at the trial of the innocent? Will He throw him aside—"plunge me in the ditch, and . . . abhor me"?

An old piano once stood discarded in a country inn. Someone now and then banged out a few off-key notes in amusement over the old rickety thing. One day a musician who loved pianos and knew how to tune them came to the inn.

The first touch grated on his ears so he asked permission to put the old wreck back in shape again. He overhauled and tuned it. Then he sat down and played while those who once despised it gathered round to admire the pleasant sound. "Who would ever have thought it!" they exclaimed. (From *Illustrations for Preachers*. Zondervan, 1946, p. 110.)

Job's friends thought of him as a cast-off wreck of humanity and to some extent he felt the same. He watched a stray, empty cloud turn to a sickly yellow in the late afternoon sunlight. In a low-pitched, deliberate voice he sighed: "My soul is weary of my life; . . . I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (10:1).

Job said he intended to speak to God about some pertinent questions. Why does God contend with him?

"Is it good unto thee," he would ask, "that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked?"

Bildad's mouth tightened. " 'The counsel of the wicked?' "

So this guilty man, himself the one who deserves the designation, calls them the wicked! Bildad was about to inject a note of defiance, but the next moment he thought better of it.

Job now turned to cataloguing his standing before God—apparently with the double intent of speaking to the Deity and to his friends at the same time.

"Thou knowest that I am not wicked. . . .

Thine hands have made me . . . ; yet thou dost destroy me. . . .

Wilt thou bring me into dust again?

Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? . . .

Thou hast granted me life and favour [in the past]. . . .

[But now] I am full of confusion. . . .

Thou huntest me as a fierce lion. . . .

Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb?"

Having declared his intention of laying these observations and questions before God, Job compressed his mouth into a straight, firm line and leveled his piercing eyes at the three men seated before him. A moment of silence followed in which Job's face bore a quizzical mask. Unspoken questions seemed to fall from his lips.

Well, what would you say if you were in my place? And how do you explain these things, if you are so wise? If I am wicked, woe unto me. But, if I am not wicked?

Then before any of his friends spoke Job indicated he

wished to add an epilogue to his queries. He is floundering in an untamed thicket of agony and despair, a confusing undergrowth of tangled plants and vines. Thus he speaks of death in the shadow of his own troubled thoughts—nonetheless, a beautiful though melancholy passage:

“ ‘Are not the days of my life few? Let me alone, that I may find a little comfort before I go whence I shall not return, to the land of gloom and deep darkness, the land of gloom and chaos, where light is as darkness’ ” (10:20-22, R.S.V.).

Job, at this time suffering pains that possibly no other man has ever endured, felt lost and abandoned by God and man. Yet God did not forget. A truth that David later expressed had a special meaning for Job even though he could not see it at the moment: “I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4).

Ever since the days of Job men have been encouraged by the divine declarations of concern. A widowed believer in God’s faithfulness realized it to her great satisfaction. When her husband, a carpenter, died she was left with a small daughter to rear but with very little money to live on. The expenses of the husband’s long illness had eaten up nearly everything they possessed. Only the tools of his trade—which were of good quality—remained.

At this low point in the poor woman’s life another blow fell upon her at the hands of a conniving neighbor soon after the funeral.

Presenting her with a bill, he said, “This is for labor I performed, for which your husband didn’t pay.”

Stunned, she replied, “It’s entirely beyond my power to pay; besides, I think my husband settled the account before he died.”

“No, he didn’t. Show me the receipt, if you think so.”

This she could not do. The neighbor said he would settle the bill by taking the tools. The poor woman desperately needed what money she could get from them for the bare necessities of life. Greatly troubled, she went to her bedroom and prayed over the matter.

As she prayed her little daughter chased butterflies. She fol-

lowed one into the garage. In there while running about she caused a packet of papers to fall from a shelf. As the girl carried them into the house the mother came out of the room where she had been praying. The widow recognized the packet as receipts for accounts paid; the first one she looked at silenced the demand of her neighbor. (From *Illustrations for Preachers*, *op. cit.*, p. 47.)

God used a little girl and an elusive butterfly to deliver a deeply distressed widow who believed His promises. A mountain of difficulty faced the poor woman but God is a mover of mountains.

Job gave God that title, mover of mountains. He did not see it yet, but the courageous Uzite still believed that someday, somehow, God would remove this huge mountain of trouble and despair.

As Robbers Prosper

GOD BE PRAISED! It was such a fine, sparkling day that one might think even Job could momentarily forget his miseries. But not really.

As the dialog resumed on this rare morning a certain glint in the eyes of the third man of the opposition delegation prepared Job for further diatribes.

Zophar of Naamath came out fighting, leveling a volley of charges against the patient sufferer.

"Should not the multitude of words be answered? and should a man full of talk be justified?" His voice rang sharp and harsh like an eagle's call.

"Should thy lies make men hold their peace?" he asked again coolly. "And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?"

The sufferer felt the old sickening sensation of frustration at such outrageous accusations. The judgmental attitude shocked Job. But he waited patiently to hear out this brash man. Maybe Zophar and the others were so set in their opinion that they wanted to shock him into a realization of sin they thought he secretly cherished.

Zophar soon revealed that the cause of their irritation arose primarily over Job's assertion of innocence. Trying to force him into admitting guilt, they construed his claim as sheer obstinacy. Furthermore, Zophar called upon Heaven to uphold their

accusations: "Oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee."

Deluded into thinking that every adversity—sickness, misfortune, disaster—came as a judgment of God because of sin in a man's life, they forgot the demands of ordinary decency and said Job deserved all he got and more too. Said Zophar, "Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth" (Job 11:6).

The critical Naamathite's remarks could be summarized thus: No man is able to find out God's mysterious ways; He cuts off and shuts up. He knows the vain men who cannot hide anything from Him. (Job, you had better repent because you're not going to get away with this little game of yours.)

This damage done, Zophar then concluded with some sublime—and truthful—words:

"If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in your tents. Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish; you will be secure, and will not fear. You will forget your misery; you will remember it as waters that have passed away. And your life will be brighter than the noonday; its darkness will be like the morning. And you will have confidence, because there is hope; you will be protected and take your rest in safety. You will lie down, and none will make you afraid; many will entreat your favor. But the eyes of the wicked will fail; all way of escape will be lost to them, and their hope is to breathe their last'" (11:14-20, R.S.V.).

Acid gathered on Job's tongue. Having patiently heard Zophar out, he drew a deep breath, and in desperation replied: "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you" (12:2).

It came as a good rejoinder, well placed and clearly understood. He then added, "But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these?"

Not sarcasm but a candid evaluation of the unsound ground these men stood on, Job's opinion voiced the cry of those who protest the distortion of truth that downgrades the characters of their fellow men.

There was a time when all men were ready to acknowledge Job as blessed of Heaven, but now he, the just and upright man, is laughed to scorn and mocked by his neighbors. Ridicule and scorn are among the hardest things with which to cope. It seemed almost unbearable to one who once had been such an eminent and highly respected figure.

"Why did you take hard drugs?" Senator Edmund S. Muskie asked a pretty teen-age heroin user during a Senate subcommittee hearing.

"Because I wanted to be accepted by my friends," she answered. "It was the thing to do."

Everyone craves to be thought well of by his peers. Job felt the bitter sting of rejection; now men who once lauded his name looked upon him as a leper to be scorned and avoided. His comfort-killing friends at least came near enough for a long talk; some others veered away as if he might give them a contagious disease.

The sage called attention to his unhappy state by alluding to a torch: "He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease" (12:5). His friends could easily comprehend what he meant. A blazing torch is valued but let the flame diminish to a mere flicker and it is cast aside as worthless. In the same way, a prosperous man is valued but let him lose his high standing and people will often kick him aside with contemptuous disdain.

Job was dealing with the raw facts of life. His friends had to admit the reality of what he said: their actions were included within the scope of his frank observation. After a moment of reflection Job stated another conclusion that has bothered many people from his day right down to the present.

"The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly" (12:6).

He now began to put forth a profound philosophy: you do not measure Heaven's estimation of a man by his prosperity in this world. James Russell Lowell expressed the dilemma thus: "Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne."

But the problem goes even further and Job referred his

friends to the evident proof of nature. "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (12:7-10).

"You see, it's like this," Job seemed to say. "In nature the violent usually prosper while the gentle and innocent are often the victims. Yet each prospers in his own way. A wolf is a wolf and a lamb will always be a lamb."

His discourse made sense and his friends had to admit it, albeit reluctantly, in their own minds. The spark of life, the ability to perform—whether that ability be used in a good or bad way—comes from the Maker of the mystic element. But the performance depends on each man; hence the thief often prospers because he has the skill and drive to apply the divinely implanted spark.

Job expanded the subject: "The deceived and the deceiver are his." They are all given life by Him. Let them go on in this world and prosper, but don't measure their goodness by material success, nor presume that God will never take notice.

The Uzite states that God makes judges fools. He overthrows the mighty. He increases the nations—lets them continue until they prove themselves evil beyond His sufferance—and then He destroys them.

Adolf Hitler bore out Job's contention. He overwhelmed the nations, ever conquering until, like Napoleon, success deceived him. Plunging into Russia, he lost the cream of his proud army.

As Job nailed down his points only the conceit of their own obstinate opinions kept his friends from seeing the truth of what he said. He tried to analyze the purpose of suffering and at the same time refute a common error. His friends, slaves to a false premise, remained in their intellectual ghetto.

Around the turn of the century the press told the story of some blacks who worked in actual slavery for nearly forty years after the Emancipation Proclamation. They were held on an iso-

lated plantation, whipped at the first sign of wandering away, and deprived of any information that might lead to a knowledge of their right to be free.

At last their troubles became so unbearable that they made a desperate break for freedom only to learn of their right to be free—slaves for the most of their lives when it could have been otherwise!

Basically, Job's great debate revolved around a similar situation.

"Release the mighty force of enlightened thought" seemed to be the contention of the Uzite; "let the truth make all men free."

"But," retorted his opponents, "you have no right to this freedom. You are the vassal wretch of your own jaded guilt, bred to misery."

"Oh, nonsense! What fiery soul, fed on the sweet nectar of truth, could endure such torture?"

But men who shun progressive truth, calm investigation, and the potent power of clear perception, leave God—who never underwrites sloppy thinking—no option. He can do nothing but abandon them to their own self-intoxication.

"They grope," said Job, "in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man."

“Physicians of No Value”

“YE ARE FORGERS of lies, ye are all physicians of no value.”

Exposed to the derision of his once-fawning friends, Job made his charge with calculated precision to let them know the depth of his disgust for their heartless performance. His head burned as if many struggling voices wanted to be heard, yet it seemed detached from the surfeit of pain in his body. The mind could still reason clearly even though agony inflamed the flesh.

Casting a quick look at the three self-appointed diagnosticians, Job continued to chastise them with his lucid tongue.

“O that ye would altogether hold your peace!” he sighed. Yes, if they would do this it would be wisdom on their part. After all, what were they doing but rubbing salt on open sores. He needed understanding; not that it would cure his wounds but in the way the touch of a mother’s gentle hand on the brow comforts while fever burns the body. But their kind of talk was more like the folly of throwing hot water on blistered skin.

“Hear now my reasoning,” countered the suffering sage of Uz, “and hearken to the pleadings of my lips.”

In the name of God they speak wickedly and talk deceitfully, he accuses, pointing out the inconsistency of his opponents who were far from gentle in denouncing him. They mock God and He will surely reprove them.

Such words sounded like a heavy dose of unwelcome medi-

cine to his listeners but they had talked as with coarse gravel in their throats. It seems reasonable to hold Job justified for attempting to put the record straight.

The sensitive, dark features of Eliphaz turned grim; keen eyes flashing, his face began to twinge with outrage. To think that this deluded fellow, obviously the just victim of God's wrath, has the audacity to accuse them in such fashion!

But while the mercury began to climb in Eliphaz' temperamental thermometer, the Uzite went right on reading his bill of charges against the three faultfinders. Your sayings are like ashes in one's mouth, he told them. One of the three made a short impatient gesture, indicating he intended to say something at this point.

One of the other two spoke up against Job before his companion could get more than a word out of his mouth. "How your tongue runs wild. What next? I don't like what I'm hearing."

But Job waved them down, saying, "Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may finish my speech."

Trouble, on some tried and tested people, sits as gracefully as a white saddle on a black horse, and this could describe Job, although his voice scratched roughly from a throat rasped by the afflictions affecting his whole body.

The sage of Uz now rose to a sublime declaration of his trust and confidence in God. Shaking off discouragement and despondency, he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15).

His words could be cited as a magnificent pronouncement of endurance, patience, and faith. This is the kind of steadfastness Jesus mentioned in commending His followers during a period of supreme trouble that would come upon the earth.

"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:9-13).

Adversity creates strength. Justice William O. Douglas was weakened and handicapped by an attack of polio during childhood. But he began walking up hills to strengthen his spindly legs. Finally, after persistent endeavor, he took to mountains, walking at a fast clip. It made him an outstanding outdoorsman and a strong, capable man in other respects.

In reference to Jesus, Hebrews 5:8 has, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

"Come our way," sneered His enemies, "and we will honor you."

When Christ gave no intention of giving in to their evil demands their enmity hardened. "Compromise or we fight!" they demanded. He didn't move in their direction, so hate crystallized around His noble head.

In a somewhat different setting Job faced the same opposition. His detractors claimed beauty is truth—and the beautiful things in their estimation included money, esteem, position, honor. However, Job stood for the proposition that truth is the essence of beauty, and patient endurance is the sublime ingredient of realization.

Often men of the world make trouble work for them by setting themselves to overcome their handicaps and deficiencies. Charles Steinmetz, often called one of the world's greatest mathematicians, disliked mathematics and almost failed to pass during his first year in college. But he took hold of the obstacle and turned the thing that troubled him most into his greatest asset.

Job could not see through the nightmare engulfing him but the troubles so deep and penetrating would toughen his moral muscles to a degree of ultimate strength and distinction—a glory and fame for all time to come. A billion people have learned of him and taken heart; his name stands for a moral victory perhaps none save Christ has ever surpassed.

Eloquently Job stated the case of every man, more or less: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down." With these words in chapter fourteen he began one of the finest dissertations on death found in any literature.

Having touched the ultimate depths of despair, Job trained a speculative eye on his opponents and called attention to proud man's limitations—there is a divine boundary, an appointed time he cannot alter. They were trying to construe something in God's purpose which he could not accept.

One is inclined to think the reasoning of both sides ran something like this:

"Just give me time and you shall see what I mean," says Job. "God is not against me as you think."

"But there is no time left," replied his companions.

"What do you mean?"

"Time has run out. God has already settled the matter. You have no more time, unless you accept our terms. We speak for God, you see."

"I will try to make myself clear," returns Job. "Listen to me."

A tree—that was Job's argument. Cut it down, yet the roots will produce another. But not so with man.

"'So man lies down and rises not again; till the heavens are no more he will not awake, or be roused out of his sleep. Oh that thou wouldest hide me in Sheol, that thou wouldest conceal me until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my service I would wait, till my release should come' " (Job 14:12-14, R.S.V.).

The proposition, as Job propounded it, came to this: man is not the arbiter of his ultimate destiny. Only God can decide what finally happens to him. Job sees the day ahead—all bright with blooming flowers and singing birds—when the demands of justice are fully satisfied. Awaking at the call of God beyond the untroubled sleep of death he hopes to see the land of perpetual life where pain and sorrow are no more.

Yet between him and that far-off land where the delectable mountains of God await him, many rocky paths and troubled deserts wait to be crossed. His flesh will have pain, his soul within mourn, thorns and thistles will spring out of the dust of the earth.

Nonetheless, Job is confident that God does not utterly for-

sake him while he crosses the wastelands of turmoil, suffering, and disaster. "Thou numberest my steps" is his affirmation of faith in the guidance of Providence and the assurance of divine concern.

My father, a railroad engineer, miner, and opponent of the church that my mother quietly believed in, had hopes for me far removed from any religious connections that might come from her influence. Therefore, when I announced intentions in that direction at the age of sixteen, he became very angry toward both my mother and me. He and I mined gold at Pierce, Idaho, after his day's work at a rock-crusher over which he had charge. When I refused to work on the Sabbath he told me to leave home. A time of trouble followed for every member of the family—my mother and two sisters sympathized but thought it best not to say anything in my behalf at the moment.

After a week my father relented. In a letter he asked me to return home and to the job. Shortly after I returned he and I walked down the road together, discussing my decision.

"I don't want to make you unhappy, Dad, but the Bible tells me to keep the Sabbath and I'm determined to do just that."

His naturally pinkish face turning red, he stepped over to a large rock beside the road. I wondered for a moment what to expect. Then he sat down on the rock and cried, something I had never seen him do before. From that moment things improved. The two sisters went along with me when I joined the church in September, my mother reasserted her childhood faith, and my father showed interest that finally led to his baptism several years later.

So trouble ultimately benefits man and serves the dynamics of a heavenly purpose: a divine call to life and glory. "Thou shalt call," said Job, "and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands" (14:15).

Ah, Job, thou wast not born for pain nor death. The Voice that will call thee from thy long, deep sleep speaks the encore of a song sweeping through the ages—a hymn of life and hope and glory, the final response of Heaven to the anguish and pain

of troubled men. Sweet Voice! Kind, majestic, powerful! Inapprehensible yet responsive to the sensitivity of hungry men—the Voice leading us to that delightful land that knows no pain or death.

"There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain."

—ISAAC WATTS

Shake the Unripe Grape

LET US IMAGINE that Job had a conversation at some time in his life with a merchant of Uz whom we shall name Hasso.

The merchant, whose god is Profit, does not hesitate to make a sharp bargain even at the expense of strict honesty, although on the whole he is a highly respected man.

"A man needs direction," points out Job after Hasso reminds him that he missed turning a neat profit on a cattle deal with a stranger.

"Agreed," replied Hasso.

"I mean a purpose."

"Of course."

"That's just what it is—my deal with the stranger. My purpose is to find the highest good and help others find it. What is your purpose?"

"Mine?" responded the merchant. "Oh, the answer is simple. A long time ago I decided to make as much money as I could—within the law, of course. I guess that's my purpose."

In a sense the debate between Job and his friends revolved around the same theme. A man acquires a purpose, he charts the direction he is going, and then he follows the resolve, come storm or fire. Job felt he had properly followed the right course; his opponents thought otherwise.

Job having stated his case, Eliphaz now took the stand and

began a harsh, critical argument against him.

"Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?"

Job shook his head sadly but said nothing. Nonsense, he thought to himself. The accusation amounted to a rebuke and a strong implication that the Uzite was presumptuous in claiming God's approval and his own innocence.

The Temanite went on with a strange eagerness to denounce his friend: "Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee."

Job winced but again restrained his lips while his opponent went on with wild charges as if the wind of turmoil had been conceived by him. Accusing the sufferer of having an arrogant spirit mixed with a certain amount of conceit, he directed several sharp, cynical questions at him:

"Art thou the first man that was born?

or wast thou made before the hills?

Hast thou heard the secret of God?

and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself {do you have a monopoly on wisdom}?"

His antagonist must have thought, You are going too far with this. But he only shrugged and listened patiently while his critic went on, proceeding to tell how everyone with any sense would agree with what he said—certainly all "the grayheaded and very aged men" did.

"I will shew thee," he declared, ". . . that which . . . wise men have told."

He gave an exposition of God's ways with men, trying to prove that misery is evidence of a man's guilt. The wicked man suffers pain. In prosperity the destroyer will come upon him. (Ah, Job, doesn't your case prove it?) The sword and starvation follow him. Desolation lays waste his dwelling place. In fact, every kind of trouble will hound a wicked man because of his sins. With him it is like the vine and the olive tree: as they drop unmaturing fruit, so he loses his possessions—look at Job's experience.

"He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall

cast off his flower as the olive" (Job 15:33).

So far the debate settled nothing insofar as each side was concerned. Eliphaz finished his speech with a harsh, grating tone. One is inclined to think that Job may have stood up, shook some dust from his torn clothes, precisely wrapped them around his shattered body and, training a speculative eye on his opponents, begun to speak rapidly.

"Miserable comforters are ye all!"

The New English Bible places his words at this point in a context of increased bitterness. Accusing them of making trouble with every breath, he cynically repeated back to them what they had been saying about him: "Will this windbag never have done? What makes him so stubborn?"

Watching the sunset strike the desert ridges with slashes of glittering fire, he paused a moment, then turning his gaze from the burnished mountain toward the awed, resentful, yet fascinated trio, he quickly changed his defensive stance.

"If you and I were to change places, I could talk like you; how I could harangue you and wag my head at you!"

He paused, looking at their impassive faces, and tried to detect some vestige of concern or a trace of sympathy. Finding none, he was about to give them some more of the same but another thought flashed into his mind and he decided otherwise. Drawing himself up to the dignity that still lingered in his once noble form he said steadily, "No, I would speak words of encouragement, and then my condolences would flow in streams" (16:5, N.E.B.).

It came as a noble sentiment but the words flew back at him and only added to a feeling of confusion and futility. He wanted to weep but that only allowed a momentary release of pent-up frustration that was about ready to blow him apart.

"What can I do?" he cried plaintively.

"Do?" replied his opponents. "Why, repent, of course."

Job drew a heavy breath. Deep down in his soul there persisted his true nature. He always tried to soothe pain rather than inflict it. Now he found himself utterly misunderstood and without comfort.

His voice took on a cold devastating tone. "My friend

wearies me with false sympathy. . . . The liar testifies against me to my face. . . . He wears me down, his hatred is plain to see; he grinds his teeth at me."

Job probably wondered, as anyone would, how these critical folks if forced into even a mild passage of pain, let alone anything like his massive agony, would have the courage and endurance to penetrate the wild jungle of suffering. Yet they sat sanctimoniously as judge and jury over him.

In the great debate the venerable sage contended for the right of a man to be heard, respected, and fairly judged. Regardless of the number arrayed against him or the mere appearance of guilt, he has a basic right to be heard and rightly judged. The inherent right of one man, on his own merit, was at stake. It pointed to the fact that God is interested in quality rather than quantity.

Lyman Beecher once preached in a backwoods church on a bitter cold day when snow lay deep on the ground. Only one man showed up but the preacher went through the service as though the place were packed. Twenty years later Beecher met that one man, who had now become a minister. Pointing to his church, he said, "Sir, the converts of that sermon are all over this country." (From *Illustrations for Preachers*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.)

Job's record also established the potential dignity of the individual. The fact that the number is the smallest possible or his cause grossly misunderstood means nothing. One man can be of priceless value and must be regarded as such by all right-thinking men.

But Job's detractors were the kind of fair-weather friends who could spit in a man's soup when prosperity changed to disaster. Like a pack of hungry wolves they bared their teeth at him. "They are all in league against me," he groaned.

"Job's a paranoid," they would have said today.

The remorseless sun bore down upon the thirsty land and the fantasy it created upon the distant playa evoked a similar reaction in Job's heated mind.

"God hath delivered me to the ungodly," he cried, "and turned me over into the hands of the wicked. . . . He hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces."

One of his friends jumped up in mock shock. Across his face were written the signs of righteous indignation, as if he thought the Uzite was trying to blame God for his own evil deeds. But Job went right on pouring out the anguish of his soul.

"His arrows rained upon me from every side; . . . he cut deep into my vitals, he spilt my gall" (16:13, N.E.B.).

Confused by his suffering, Job also failed to understand—as some people do even to this day—the part Satan has in all of this. But after stating his complaint he quickly turned from involving God to elaborate on his own calamitous condition. "I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin. . . . My face is foul with weeping."

Yet Job's intense loyalty to God compels him to cease his complaints—caused by an overpowering despair—to renew his implicit faith in the Eternal's ultimate mercy and justice.

Job's struggle to hold his faith and at the same time maintain his individual self-respect before scornful men emphasized the battle men must often fight with themselves.

In Africa a former cannibal found himself after his conversion kneeling in church beside the man who had slain and eaten his father. On that earlier occasion he had sworn vengeance. Now, in church, the old hatred rose and he fled out of the meeting, his mind torn by conflicting emotions.

By himself in the jungle, he prayed for power to forgive and for deliverance from hate. A new spirit came over him; he returned and again knelt beside his former foe, now an enemy no longer. (From *Illustrations for Preachers*, *op. cit.*, p. 80.)

A man's right to the means of salvation and justice also involves his responsibility as an individual member of the human race. This the African showed as he struggled against hate in his heart. Job staked out his claim to the broad, rich acres of God's concern for a troubled man when he said, "My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God."

From Job's day to the present, man often figures the unripe grapes of life as worthless. "Shake them off and get rid of them," he says. But God keeps them on the vine until maturity brings a well-developed product.

At Lowest Ebb

"I AM RUINED," cried Job. "Wherever I turn, men taunt me, and my day is darkened by their sneers" (Job 17:2, N.E.B.).

Light stole tentatively over the dark ridge as another morning began.

Dawn?

Hardly for this man of Uz, buffeted by pain and the callous insensitivity of his friends. The morning, as usual on the desert, began crystal clear, the cool air refreshing, the brilliant sky lighting with the coming day. But none of this display of creation's glory found much response in Job's mind. Nor in the minds of his friends who woke early to resume the increasingly torrid debate. In their eyes loomed a question that did not require words to express:

"You find life vulgar, do you?"

"Yes and no," came the unspoken response in Job's attitude, a quick twist of his head saying more than words could convey.

His opponents were rude and ignoble, caustic and even ribald. His once luxuriant life had turned to bitter ashes and he sat in uncouth sackcloth. All this seemed vulgar and sordid to his acquaintances. But he emphatically did not think God looked upon him in exactly the same light. In his mind the essential things remained clear.

Taking a cloth he had lifted to wipe a festering sore, he dropped it in an exaggerated manner of emphasis and came around again to the central point of his argument.

"I am held up as a byword in every land,
a portent for all to see;
my eyes are dim with grief,
my limbs wasted to a shadow.
Honest men are bewildered at this,
and the innocent are indignant at my plight.
In spite of all, the righteous man maintains his course,
and he whose hands are clean grows strong again" (17:6-9, N.E.B.).

Job told his friends that there was much they didn't know. True, a man could get into real trouble and be roundly despised for it. He could touch the bottom of failure and defeat. But the resolute man goes right ahead and finally surfaces again to enjoy ultimate success. The idea is this: give a person the right to survive, the opportunity to try again. Job somehow, in spite of his extreme suffering, still believed God would eventually exonerate him. He pleaded for men to give him a fighting chance by their understanding and confidence.

However, he didn't expect much from these people, set in their hard, legalistic frame of mind. Again he crossed swords: "Come on, one and all, try again! I shall not find a wise man among you" (17:10, N.E.B.).

The broad valley, spread out before the lonesome mountain, was like a fiery furnace. The summer sun, blazing hot, had withered every little plant so that only the larger, tough variety survived—a bush here and there, with prickly skin and thorns to snag the unwary. The desert can be both irritating and sublime, matching a man's moods.

No one seemed in a mood to notice the beauty of anything as the great debate continued.

The Uzite ended his speech in complete despair. "My heart-strings are snapped. Day is turned into night. . . . I spread my couch in the darkness."

Job was groping in a dark tunnel of anguish from which he could not, as yet, see any way out. Only hope remained and his

supply of this spiritual commodity began to run out. Yet, unknown to him, a candle flickered somewhere in the dark. As Longfellow in "Resignation" wrote:

"Let us be patient! These severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise,
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise."

This can be seen in men and nations if they look long enough and persist in their convictions. However, Job's opponents indicated none of this in their appraisal of his situation. Dragging one foot impatiently over a patch of bare gravel, Bildad the Shuhite let forth a blast of hot air like the breath of a volcano.

"How soon will you bridle your tongue?"

His excess of pride was matched by an excess of scorn. He looked upon Job as a stubborn man because he refused to admit guilt. Their third-degree interrogation had produced no confession so Bildad directed a barrage of abusive words. Having abandoned himself to the cult of toughness, an element of crudeness surfaced in what he said.

"Is the earth to be deserted to prove you right?"

Even while he spoke, Bildad, in spite of his bluster, appeared somewhat defensive. "Why are we stupid in your sight?" (18:3, R.S.V.).

Job could only wonder what moral options they were calculating to block off, encircling him with their assumptions and then leaving him to simmer in a feeling of guilt. How could all this happen when he had lived by the rules? He keenly felt unfairly judged.

"No," intoned the Shuhite again, "it is the wicked whose light is extinguished." Boring into his target, he kept up the devastating recitation. These evil people—Job certainly included—will fall headlong into a net, iniquity will cause their destruction, disease eat away their skin.

He is sure of it—terror, fear, calamity, and death come upon a man of evil, such as the one before him. "He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world."

Bildad ended his speech with the parting shot, "Such is the

fate . . . of evildoers." Perhaps resentful that Job had not submitted supinely to his first attack, he added this fresh fury to the charges of stubbornness and guilt. Possibly he was even beginning to see some justification in Job's contention, and pride caused him to smother conviction with a torrent of vehement words.

Had Bildad and his companions known the circumstances they would have realized that the senselessness of their charges was matched only by the malice of the argument. But false ideas create malicious conclusions even in the thinking of people who otherwise are quite logical.

The thinking of men as well as nations is shaped by ideals. Strength to defend these ideals is acquired by enduring danger, false accusations, and hardship. Job's friends began with a wrong premise and went on to develop a highly lethal conclusion. Though the Uzite's fevered brain, due to extreme suffering, developed distorted deductions, he could still hold a right concept of himself because he was basically a highly motivated man. Trouble only made him stronger.

Finland, a nation of much trouble, managed to survive hard times and gain surprising strength. Czarist Russia tried to suppress this rugged little dependency of hers, but the Finns possessed a stamina that could not be crushed. Yet for a while the struggle seemed hopeless. "For 700 years," wrote a prominent citizen who fled the country, "Finns have been free men; now they have become Russian serfs."

Another writer lamented, "So ends Finland."

But the pessimists spoke too soon. The valiant little country, like Job in his troubles, possessed hidden strength that surfaced when the real tests came. The leading religious figure in Finland at that time said, "Sacrifices have been demanded of us to which no people can consent. The Finnish people can not forgo their Constitution, which is a gift of the Most High, and which next to the Gospel, is their most cherished possession."

The end of World War I brought independence and the emergence of a strong little nation composed of sturdy, vigorous people. But Finland's troubles were not over. Two attacks by Russia just before and during World War II almost crushed the

country but the Finns surprised everyone by their amazing resistance.

Then following the country's separate peace with Russia, 100,000 former Nazi allies retreated from northern Finland with vengeance, practicing a fearful scorched-earth policy. Nazi fury knew no bounds. La Verne Bradley, writing in the *National Geographic* magazine, says, "In their wake they left perhaps the most thorough devastation of any battlefield of the war" (August, 1947, p. 237). Approximately 35,000 square miles were totally devastated. Almost 200,000 people fled into neighboring Sweden.

After this the U.S.S.R. sliced off 16,173 square miles and imposed \$300 million in product payments on the small nation. But the bruised, hungry, bleeding country took it all in stride, asked for no sympathy and went ahead to become one of today's most progressive nations. How did the amazing Finns do it?

The secret of their remarkable performance lay in the Finnish character. "People live and work with the lusty energy of all northern inhabitants, increased twofold because they are Finns," writes one observer. (*Ibid.*, pp. 238, 239.) Moreover, the Finnish reaction to suffering, trouble, and the natural rigors of the stern northern land itself has been responsible without doubt for producing a stalwart people.

Further, a Scandinavian version of the "Protestant ethic" is probably a factor. Finland was long a true democracy (it established, first of all European lands, the right of women to vote).

Job and the Finns had much in common. Both suffered terribly but reacted in a way that created strength, not frustration and defeat. Each—the ancient priest and a modern people—found motivation in a great ideal that glorifies the dignity of man. Actually it epitomizes the revelation of Sacred Scripture: every striving man deserves his place in the sun because he is a son of God.

Let this inspiring concept possess a man or a people, and tyrants, fire, the sword, boils, blisters, wagging tongues, can never spell defeat or despair.

“Pulverize Me With Words”

WISE TO THE desert, Job knew how the mountains had a way of appearing far off until one came almost up to them. Then they seemed to stop playing their game and stood still right before him, rising up in immovable crimson splendor. To Job it appeared that his friends—and even God, in His own way—were playing some kind of game with him, an inexplicable wandering toward a great mystery that apparently defied solution.

He arose painfully. Soon they went at it again—the great debate—this time Job holding the floor. “How long will you exhaust me and pulverize me with words?” he asked. “Time and time again you have insulted me and shamelessly done me wrong” (Job 19:2, 3, N.E.B.).

The accusers had taken the sensitive quicksilver of human anguish in clumsy hands. The accused reacted with natural resentment. “You lord it over me and try to justify the reproaches leveled at me.”

Throughout the debate Job cried for equality, not the degradation they sought to impose upon him because he did not measure up to the standard they set—in fact, a most distorted measuring line. They had humiliated him as a human being, not according to creed, class, or color, but by the more degrading method of imputed guilt. Actually it amounted to segregation of the mind and slavery of the spirit.

Job protested this unfair method of dealing with people in trouble. His argument applies to all men involved in all kinds of difficulty. It was a cry for human justice and consideration. But now a more important and less fathomable problem arose and he himself called attention to it.

He called his friends to quit troubling and aggrieving him because "God himself has put me in the wrong, he has drawn the net round me." The Divine had walled him in and he could not break out; Heaven had blocked the road. "His anger is hot against me and he counts me his enemy."

Job's friends cast meaningful glances at one another. "Aha," they seemed to say in their eyes. "He admits it; he's coming around to exactly the point we have in mind."

But Job was thinking of something else. He implied that God's ill-use called for sympathy and encouragement, not condemnation, from his friends.

"If I cry 'Murder!' no one answers; if I appeal for help, I get no justice."

All Job gets in this deplorable situation is scorn, contempt, and maltreatment. He then recited the way even those near and dear were acting:

"My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I intreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for the children's sake of mine own body. Yea, young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me" (19:14-19).

Job began the world's painful crawl toward understanding trouble. Even he had not yet realized that God is not the cause. But he did eloquently appeal for men to illuminate their minds and soften their hearts as they viewed the shadows of life.

"Have pity upon me," he pleaded, "have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me."

It was a pathetic appeal for help that seemed in precious low quantity.

In Riverside, California, where I live, a 21-year-old woman, trapped by a wall of fire in the house where she was visiting, jumped into a shower and got her clothes wet before running through the flames. Firemen said it saved her life. Job's appeal called upon people to seek the attitude that would protect them from the flaming fury of bigotry, animosity, hostility, and criticism. By showering themselves with a protective element of love and understanding they could then escape from their intellectual and spiritual firetraps.

"Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" Job has had his wish; the dramatic plea of his lips has been read by millions. Moreover, man has gone a long way across the desert of intellect he strove to conquer.

Job didn't lose his confidence. In the background of his thinking there remained the tough alloys of faith and loyalty. From the depths of despair and despondency he impressed his opponents by reciting a creed of faith that has ever since served men in their moments of test and trial.

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (19:25-27).

The very eloquence and beauty of Job's final argument exasperated Zophar, the hot-blooded Naamathite. He belonged to the rear guard that never gives up without a fight. Perhaps he never admitted his error. Moreover, he carried a chip on his shoulder and would fight at the drop of a hat. "I make haste" to answer, he said.

The desert temperature soared; Zophar's temper was even hotter as he lashed at Job.

"Surely you know this," he began. "Ever since man was placed upon the earth the triumphing of the wicked has been short." Zophar's words reflected ill-disguised contempt and a cultivated air of disgust for the arguments of Job. "The joy of

the hypocrite [is] but for a moment," he asserted.

Job's plea for a decent understanding of trouble had fallen only on deaf ears. Zophar's haughty response shows how unwilling the three opponents were to change their attitude or thinking. The beleaguered man had cried for help but their wrong ideas prevented them from extending a helping hand.

Agitated beyond calm reflection, Zophar sarcastically denounced Job by inference: "Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue . . . , it is the gall of asps within him. He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up."

By this point in the dispute it had become obvious that each side stood adamantly for two fundamentally different viewpoints on the entire philosophy of life and misfortune. Job contended for compassion: Lift troubled people up, help them, free them from their bondage, whatever it is.

No, responded Zophar and his friends. God is punishing them. It's His will that slaves should be slaves, so don't interfere with God. The very fact that a man suffers misfortune is evidence of divine wrath, so leave him alone to wallow in his own vomit.

Zophar knew how to give a personal bite to his attacks. Job's excruciating pain called for corrective medicine. So the fevered brain of his opponent framed words for the occasion. "When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating" (20:23).

In the heat of his anger Zophar concluded his remarks with a sting intended directly for Job's edification. "This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God."

Trouble is indeed a medicine for the soul, but it is not to be interpreted or administered as Zophar prescribed. It's an evil that hits some people harder than others, but no one escapes the infernal touch.

While reading a Sunday edition of the *Riverside (California) Press-Enterprise* my eye caught a striking title: "This family counts troubles by the dozen."

The family, according to the news story, "has troubles that won't stop. The chronicle of their woes is so long it's hard to comprehend."

Two of the three children, aged nine and eleven, have synovitis, an inflammation of the joints. They have to be immobilized in casts at various times.

"And that's just the beginning," says the report.

The nine-year-old, a boy, wears a neck brace because he cracked a vertebra while riding a bicycle. At the age of two he almost electrocuted himself when he stuck an extension cord socket in his mouth. It sent him sprawling across the room, tore his lip, and burned his throat. He stopped breathing three times on the way to the hospital. During his young life this accident-prone boy of an accident-afflicted family has suffered three concussions, broken an arm and a finger. Furthermore, he underwent a hernia operation and has had neurological problems.

Two years ago he and his sister were in casts from the neck down at the same time for their synovitis.

Their five-year-old sister is the "well" one but her list of troubles includes pneumonia four times, asthma, eczema, and the usual childhood diseases.

As if this weren't enough, the husband cracked under the strain, the family separated, leaving the troubled mother with the troubled children.

"Like many children in grim situations," concludes the article, "the children surprise you with their ready smiles and cheerful dispositions.

"But they've never known what life is like without illness, accidents, and bills that are hard to pay."

"The road to valor is builded by adversity," said Ovid in "Tristia." That being so, this troubled family in time will likely produce valorous people. That would serve as a modern confirmation of the ancient proposition propounded by Job.

Moreover, when many Riversiders read about the troubled family living among them they concluded their own troubles were not too bad after all. The results: less complaining and more interest in other people.

“They Spend Their Days in Wealth”

TROUBLE COMES IN all shapes and sizes. The saint and the sinner both must suffer, but the saint builds good character from his conflicts with the enemy in the great controversy.

It is good—even necessary—to have a correct view of adversity. Job saw the light; his opponents sat in darkness—stubborn, confused, and unreconstructed.

Possibly the Uzite said something like “Good-by, a long good-by, to all my greatness.”

Job may have observed some plant that a servant had nurtured during the mild days of spring. First it put forth the tender leaves of hope. Next came the blossoms to bear a blushing promise of harvest. But a hot, dry wind off the desert blew upon the delicate plant and all its peculiar greatness withered.

Undoubtedly that was how Job felt about himself. Yet through all the agony and despair he did not lose sight of the basic dignity of man and his relationship to God. Zophar, having made his last venomous speech, receded into silence, no more to be heard, and Job began the next round.

Now the Uzite, no longer irritated, comes into his innovative, analytical best, triumphing decisively over the erroneous arguments of his friends. “Hear diligently my speech . . .” he begins. “And after that I have spoken, mock on.”

He had decided to deliver a blockbuster for that day and age—a revolutionary philosophy that well deserved the advance

warning he sounded: "Be astonished."

Evil men prosper, spend their lives in wealth and ease, then suddenly die without suffering for their misdeeds. "They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave" (Job 21:13). Moreover, these same men are mockers of God: "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?"

One of the Uzite's friends took a long breath, a hissing sound dragging through his lips; the second wagged his head disapprovingly; the third just sat in immobile silence, reflecting indignation and shock. "Why, this is contrary to our fundamental belief," each said to himself. "Such reckless talk is bound to demoralize society—the wicked will become more defiant and the good will lose their motive to serve God."

But Job's insight—clarified by suffering—was based on honest observation. Willing to face the facts of life, though hard to understand, he was the exploratory kind who would not let old opinions or outdated ideas confuse him. His were the open seas, his the spirit to explore when new continents of truth awaited discovery.

The time was overdue for men to clear their minds of a monstrous misconception that stifled the human spirit without making anything better. Built on falsehood, an edifice is bound to collapse. But Job's spirit of fearless searching after truth expands the human mind in one discovery after another. It is like the small stone in Alexander Pope's "Temple of Fame:"

"As on the smooth expanse of crystal lakes
The sinking stone at first a circle makes;
The trembling surface by the motion stirred,
Spreads in a second circle, then a third;
Wide, and more wide, the floating rings advance,
Fill all the wat'ry plain, and to the margin dance."

Job, on the occasion of the third round, laid down a principle that has guided religion, science, and research ever since. First you observe, then search and prove, finally you tell it to the world without shame or fear of contempt and hostility. Millions have advanced onto new ground of Bible truth by this sound basis. Men have lost their jobs, been denounced by

friends and relatives for honoring the commandments of God, but they went fearlessly ahead because they knew it was the right thing to do. Moreover, in the end, the results were always gratifying and satisfactory. Job would also prove this point in the days ahead.

But now he was out to prove that truth cannot always be measured by public opinion, tradition, or popularity. He used the figure of a prosperous rich man to elucidate a pertinent fact of the first magnitude.

"How oft is the candle of the wicked put out!" he said. Usually not very often; generally it's just the opposite. Therefore, in this world trouble or no trouble is not always a criterion of divine displeasure or favor. He cites two typical cases. "One [man] dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. . . . Another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust."

At this stage Job's thinking was influenced by the extreme suffering that accompanied the consciousness of his personal innocence. Yet through it all he held on to the faith he had in God's goodness and the ultimate vindication of the righteous.

His tenacity was something like that of Gertrude Long, aged 58, of Glendale, California, who held on to a little tree thus saving her life.

Her ordeal began when her car hurtled down a 150-foot precipice. Flung out of the car, she caught hold of a small tree about halfway down the cliff. Almost blinded by loss of her glasses, bleeding and stung by insects, she hung on desperately through torturing heat and thirst.

"I just hung on though it seemed like years," she said later. She knew that giving up would plunge her to certain death far below where the car had landed. Finally someone, hearing her desperate calls, telephoned for help. Sheriff's deputies and firemen reached her by ropes and lowered her in a basket to the canyon floor. A short stay at the hospital took care of lacerations and exposure.

Job hung on to the well-rooted tree of faith while buffeted by torturing troubles and stung by carping critics.

Eliphaz, rising to carry on the argument against Job, smiled

cynically and stretched his heavy lips to almost twice their normal proportions.

"No," it can be assumed he said most emphatically, "you're wrong. Absolutely wrong."

"Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?" (22:5).

How did he reach such fantastic conclusions? That is easy to perceive, he would have said—look at the dire punishment God has heaped upon Job. Eliphaz and his friends had a fixed idea in their heads and no reasonable logic could pry it loose. They were the infallible interpreters of God's will.

A mouse could be seriously convinced of his greatness one moment before a cat swallowed him. Such an absurd idea of himself characterized Eliphaz at this time.

Pride of opinion, not humble enough to be reachable, lacking an open mind, he represented a large segment of the human race. Even some very pious church people, millenniums since, still mix truth with error and then hold tenaciously to their disapproved creeds.

Honestly thinking, no doubt, that Job's colossal sins brought the dire wrath of God upon him, he strove to jolt his friend into a realization of guilt and thus be restored to Heaven's favor.

"Mind your ways, Job," one can almost hear him say as he directs a beautiful yet unwarranted personal admonition towards the Uzite.

"Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. . . . If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles" (22:21-23).

Ah, Job, the good days will come back again if you will only listen to us and repent of your sins. "Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust. . . . And thou shalt have plenty of silver."

Just listen to us and everything will be all right. Give up these strange new ideas you're talking about and come over to our side. God is with us. It's obvious He isn't with you. So why hold on to these funny ideas and be out of step with the rest of the world?

Perhaps Job laughed a little—quietly, to himself. He could afford to, knowing he was innocent of all the wickedness they attributed to him. The future lay ahead and there could be many surprises, so why not smile a little, even if one didn't feel like it?

Dorothy Adams, a retired psychologist and a perennial optimist, didn't feel like smiling on the evening she talked about her problems. She admitted this was the first time she had felt completely discouraged.

In a period of one month she had suffered a case of mumps, a twister ripped off the roof of her house overlooking the Salton Sea, and then a rainstorm completed the work of destruction. Besides, she faced the prospect of a return bout with surgery.

"You have heard about Job in the Bible, haven't you?" I asked her.

"Oh yes," she replied, "and I thought about your telling us about all these things" (a reference to my book *Hidden Patterns and the Grand Design*).

Three days later my wife and I pulled up to the wrecked house at Salton Sea and found Don and Dorothy Adams there. The beautiful house was indeed a shambles. But Dorothy had become her usual cheerful self again.

The twister picked out their house and some telephone poles—the only objects destroyed in the whole area. Why were they the only victims selected?

At first the question bothered her, but now Dorothy quoted Romans 8:28: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

She remarked how thankful they were that their grandchildren were not playing in the living room the moment the storm struck. The floor was covered with flying glass from a large window shattered into a thousand lethal pieces.

I inquired about her health.

"Oh, much better," she informed me, "and insurance will restore the house."

Job's ancient book of wisdom asserts, "When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person" (Job 22:29).

“I Shall Come Forth as Gold”

“ART THOU HE that should come, or do we look for another?”

John the Baptist, in prison for daring to stand up for the right, sent messengers to ask Jesus the question. It reflected, no doubt, the despair of the loyal prophet, left to decay in a foul dungeon and then lose his head at the behest of an evil, vindictive woman.

Why didn't Jesus speak the word that would deliver him? The great Miracle Worker could easily have done it. The question seemed to bother John.

“Jesus, why don't You get me out of this wretched place?”

But Christ did not deliver John. There was a good reason, wrapped in the mysterious shroud of infinite wisdom. The Baptist was just as much loved and honored by the Divine in the dungeon as in the heyday of his glorious witnessing for truth—perhaps even more, if that were possible.

One clue may explain why. Already there seemed to be a trace of rivalry between the disciples of John and those who followed Christ. Did Heaven foresee the possibility of some unhappy developments? John himself, on the occasion of Christ's baptism, had said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

Job and his friends agonized over why such things happen, but the Uzite reduced the confusing arguments to sound logic

and consistency. Speaking of God's dealings, he said: "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me" (Job 23:14).

On such a basis the suffering of some people who have a long lingering illness at least can be partially explained. On the other hand—anticipating the outcome of Job's troubles—one can discern a benign purpose in suffering that leads to a happy conclusion.

In all the inscrutable purposes of God it was allowed that Job suffer for a while and that John die as a martyr, but many times during their lives they were the special recipients of God's unfailing concern. David's assertion, like a thousand others in the Bible, states the case clearly: "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" (Psalm 34:4).

Yet some of the hardships common to man must be blended into Heaven's special favors, else religion would become a magical way out of the realities of life. If all the saints were lifted above the infirmities and diseases of mortals, including those of old age, then where would the necessary disciplines of life come in?

However, Job felt singled out for unusual treatment, and indeed he was—but for a special purpose. His friends took the occasion to systematically degrade him by a species of brain-washing. On the theory of what's worth doing is worth over-doing, they slashed at him with the weapons of a superstitious fatalism.

This rhetoric of despair, combined with Job's own misconception of God's character, only increased his pain and anguish. He groped in the haunting shadows of distress, trying to comprehend why God punished him. How could He do all of this, and why? The poetic form of the original comes through in the versified printing of *The New English Bible*:

"My thoughts today are resentful,
for God's hand is heavy on me in my trouble.
If only I knew how to find him,
how to enter his court,
I would state my case before him
and set out my arguments in full;
then I should learn what answer he would give

and find out what he had to say.

Would he exert his great power to browbeat me?

No; God himself would never bring a charge against me.

There the upright are vindicated before him,
and I shall win from my judge an absolute discharge."

(Job 23:1-7.)

Eliphaz snorted. His face, like those of his companions, was set in coldness. Their theological unsoundness, heated by the fire of debate, had transformed them from sympathetic friends to dogmatic foes. Their thinking about God chilled their souls with fear rather than warming them with love. Job, too, shared this misunderstanding. Yet his loyalty and comprehension rose majestically above theirs. Said he: "I am not reduced to silence by the darkness nor by the mystery which hides him" (23:17, N.E.B.).

Such people always make capital out of adversity. A man in a small town, who ran for a public office, was so thoroughly beaten that he almost looked ridiculous. But he turned defeat into an asset by his clever sense of humor. A sign appeared in his store window offering twenty-five dollars for the name of anyone who voted for him. The whole town laughed with him and soon new people showed up at his store to patronize such a good loser.

Possibly God also admires a good loser—at least, He permitted things to happen in Job's life that put him in that category. In chapter 23, verse ten, Job voiced these wonderfully inspiring words: "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

Shakespeare had the same thought in mind:

"He is not worthy of the honeycomb

That shuns the hive because the bees have stings."

A harbor is a safe place for ships but ships are made to dare the storms of open seas, not the shelter of quiet harbors.

The scene of the great confrontation was far removed from ships and stormy seas, but the struggles of man and nature proceeded nonetheless. The mountains—monstrous blocks risen from the searing plains—stood like fantastic architectural con-

ceptions burned by the lavish sun. They seemed to cast a hot spell upon the intense heat of each man's words.

Farewell, fresh cool morning! Each hour increased the heat of the day and calcinated the ardent fever of debate. Job, completely committed to the idea that man has certain inalienable rights, sought to redress a great wrong. Tortured in mind and body, as was the land by the fury of midday sun, he nonetheless never lost sight of the basic dignity of man. His friends challenged that concept and consigned him to the bondage of spiritual darkness. They could not see the bloom on the cactus because of the needles. Job looked at the bright flowers of love and faith; the needles were mere pricks that did not spoil his appreciation for the beauty of the delicate blossoms.

His argument continues through chapter 24. God does not move quickly to punish evil or reward good. (He recites the acts of vice that often go unpunished for a long time.) Therefore it is basically wrong to judge men by the standard of adversity or prosperity. Often the oppressors of the poor or defenseless continue with a grand flourish on this earth.

The inequities of life trouble Job. His compassionate eyes fall upon the poor.

"The poor rise early like the wild ass,
when it scours the wilderness for food;
but though they work till nightfall,
their children go hungry" (24:5, N.E.B.).

It often seems, laments Job, that God pays no heed to their prayers. At the same time, murderers, thieves, adulterers, seducers, and extortioners, who are as the scum upon the surface of water, enjoy life and prosper. But wait!

"The day of reckoning is no secret to the Almighty,
though those who know him have no hint of its date"
(24:1, N.E.B.).

Probably having taken time out for a drink, he began the second phase of his contention with these words about the wicked, and ends in a similar vein:

"They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn" (24:24).

Job's penetrating eyes, half defiant and flashing conviction, pierced the very souls of his opponents while his lips chastised their minds.

"And if it be not so . . . ,” he challenged, “who will make me a liar?”

None attempted to speak and Job put a persuasive ring into his final words. Prove me wrong. Either put up or close up. “ ‘If it is not so, who will . . . show that there is nothing in what I say?’ ” (24:25, R.S.V.).

As to Job's contention that the proud, prospering man of evil will finally have his day in court, consider Adolf Hitler.

My wife and I traveled in Germany as Hitler was rising to power. The symbol of the swastika appeared everywhere; a great nation was being mesmerized by a shrewd, calculating leader with boundless ambitions.

A new order, a thousand years of national glory, written in blood and iron, possessed the consciousness of a people who fell under the hypnotic spell of unrelenting propaganda and mass agitation.

“Nothing can stop me now,” shouted the Führer, as he took over the nation. Then rapidly consolidating his power he marched on to one brilliant victory after another. He showed consummate skill in reducing his enemies. The massive Nazi legions swept triumphantly toward his dream of world conquest.

“Conquest and subjugation of Europe is our first task,” he cried; “after that, the world!”

All told, Adolf Hitler's march toward his goal cost fifty million lives, including the shockingly brutal extermination of six million Jews.

For a while he seemed invincible. “Yet God in his strength,” as Job declared, “carries off even the mighty; they may rise, but they have no firm hope of life” (24:22, N.E.B.).

On April 30, 1945, Adolf Hitler, having dragged his country into its greatest calamity, shot himself, amid the ruins of Berlin.

It amounted to a Wagnerian nightmare paralleling the lines of Job: “For a moment they rise to the heights, but are soon gone; iniquity is snapped like a stick” (24:24, N.E.B.).

“His Squadrons Are Without Number”

SLOWLY THE DAYS rolled on, perhaps seven, perhaps twenty. One faithful servant always came with a little food to minister to Job's needs.

It could have happened this way. In the light of anything to the contrary, let us assume it did. We shall call the servant Gomer, which means “complete.”

When he first came the sun had risen and a warming beam slanted on the person of Job. But it emphasized the wretched condition of the sufferer. A man in ragged clothes has little dignity, especially if they cover a festering body.

Offensive! And the smell—anything but the smell! But the servant insisted on filling his bowl and pouring some water.

“Master. My poor master.”

“Not your ‘poor master,’ ” interjected one of Job's familiars, “but your ‘wrong-doing master.’ ”

Gomer, boldly for a servant, wagged his finger at the critic and corrected him. “Don't say anything like that again.”

Job got up, scratched his head, and stretched. “Why, I'm not poor at all. Believe it or not, I have a reason for living.”

All looked at him quizzically.

“Yes,” he went on, “God wants me to live, else He would have slain me. He has something for me.”

Gomer saw Job's back when a part of his garment fell down.

"Your back's on fire. It looks like someone whipped you with thorns." He flinched, astonished but sympathetic. "Why, your hands, too! I'll go at once and get some soothing ointment."

Job restrained him. "No. Even the touch of a feather pains me."

"Please. I must do it." And he was off to find the salve.

Job's wife came back with Gomer and began to help him apply the balm but the sight sickened her and she had to leave. Gomer applied it gently even though he couldn't avoid all irritation. The three friends looked on silently. Such work belonged to servants and, anyway, they had no intention of infecting their hands by body contact.

Besides this, they had talked themselves out. There seemed to be no way of refuting the man. Bildad gave a short reply, recorded in six brief verses—the last of the arguments of Job's three friends. He avoided the basic subject, speaking only about God's dominion and glory.

"His squadrons are without number" (Job 25:3, N.E.B.).

To acknowledge the majesty and power of God would have been a grand finale to his part in the debate had he not made a last stinging thrust: "Man . . . is a worm." Zealous to defend a weak position, the three put Job strictly in the category of a worm.

Unknown to all, including himself, Job had been launched on a personal odyssey toward the fair port of truth. How to chart the journey and equip the ship was his concern.

His comforters chided: "There's no need of a journey at all, much less ship or compass."

They wanted to chain him just where he lay, allowing no right whatsoever to the new thoughts and ambitions he entertained. So why consider a voyage? Each gave his verdict:

Eliphaz: "Guilty."

Bildad: "Guilty."

Zophar: "Guilty."

Their minds were closed. Job contended for the open mind, expansive thinking. Launch out into new thoughts, new truth, expanded horizons, seemed to be his plea. His three friends re-

jected the whole idea. They locked the door and threw away the key.

But stronger men and greater nations rise from the arena of struggle, stress, and trouble. The United States came very close to failure even before it got seriously started as a nation. Internal stress almost tore the contending segments apart.

When George Washington left Mount Vernon to become the first President of the United States the prospects were most discouraging. He felt like a "culprit going to his place of execution." Dark rumors, discord, depression, prostrated the land. Continental currency, inflated, was almost worthless—a joke in Europe.

After terrific struggles the jealous States managed to adopt a blueprint and form a congress. New York voted for the union by only a three-vote majority in its legislature. Patrick Henry led a strong movement to form a southern confederacy. When a federal government did take shape it was financially insolvent. All signs pointed toward dismal failure.

But those desperate struggles for survival created a backbone of strength and faith that finally propelled the infant republic into one of the greatest success stories of all time. In it can be seen the underlying principle of the Job ethic. Trouble, struggle, test, and trial if resolutely faced do not ruin anyone or anything; they develop strength and vigor. Job gave truth a brighter luster and he came out of the test a famous man of great moral strength.

When Bildad ended his short speech, Job stood up and began a long discourse that fills six whole chapters. He lauds the power and glory of God. In verse seven (chap. 26) he utters a scientific fact completely alien to his age: "He . . . hangeth the earth upon nothing." The ancients believed pillars supported the earth. Other ancients thought the world rested on a huge elephant and a monster turtle.

Job calls attention throughout this preliminary part of his speech to the majesty and power of the great Creator, the divine Sustainer. Yet after saying all he can about the exalted One who "garnished the heavens," he exclaims, "Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him?" (26:14).

Noteworthy is the fact that Job, who thought God caused him all his pain and suffering, still glorifies and praises Him, the great worshipful One, ruling all things serenely by His awful power and majesty. Indeed, Job is rising grandly from the testing; a great and honorable man is casting an image of grandeur across the pages of time.

The grandeur of America also rose from the hot flames of bitter struggle. Having survived the first test at her inception, the Civil War purified the country for its further destiny. But here again a country agonized on the brink of disaster.

At Lincoln's election disunion broke out immediately. The South seceded; disloyalty was rampant through the North. "In Washington the treasury was plundered; the nation's ships were sent abroad, her troops dispersed, her arsenals stripped to furnish arms to the insurgents."—MILLET, *Historic Characters*, VIII (Boston, 1900), p. 13.

Leaving his home in Springfield, Illinois, Lincoln said:

"I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well."—*Ibid.*

Then he plunged into the long, dark, sad night. For fear of assassination he had to be secreted into Washington. His first move was to stem the tide of disunion and forge the remainder into a determined nation with a purpose. This he did with consummate skill. Finally after many bloody battles and untold suffering he felt strong enough to emancipate the slaves.

During his second inaugural address on March 4, 1865, Abraham Lincoln said, The war came. "Neither [party] expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it had already attained. . . .

"Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge

not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."—HENRY STEELE COMMAGER, ed., *Documents of American History*, 6th ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1958), pp. 442, 443.

The furious hurricane purified a great land, reaffirmed the declarations of Job, and confirmed his contention:

" 'The shades below tremble,
the waters and their inhabitants. . . .
But the thunder of his power
who can understand?' " (26:5-14, R.S.V.).

In the agonizing thunder of that power the land conceived a new splendor and a great nation was reborn.

A Vein for Silver and a Place for Gold

JOB'S CONDITION MUST have been a subject of no little interest throughout Uz.

"Something extraordinary is surely taking place," were words one can well assume people repeated with much curiosity and concern.

Of course, everyone knew about the calamitous stroke of God, the undiluted wrath of Heaven meted out as punishment on a man presumed guilty of heinous crimes. The coming of the three friends, also, with their attendants and other evidences of importance, attracted widespread attention.

Speculation was rife. What great sin caused such awful judgments to fall upon the wretched victim? Rumor invented one tale after another; fortunately Job heard none of them for people shunned him like the plague.

Possibly the mind of Job, gloomy with fearful forebodings, retreated to the comfort of recollecting happier days, those times when prosperity and fame smiled upon him and a serene family environment made life pleasant indeed. Among those flashbacks of memory there likely appeared a child—his youngest—a beautiful, affectionate girl. No names are recorded of his sons and daughters, mention is made only of their tragic deaths. Therefore, we shall have to invent a name for this fond child of a happy family. Let it be Masina.

"Masina, my little dove, my Masina," he says to himself as

those delightful days of the past float through his mind. "You're gone, my sweet child."

He falls upon the ground and cries in pathetic, heart-rending tones.

"Masina is gone and the others too. All is darkness and desolation. Alas! I am worse than dead!"

But he forgets his pain and misery. Masina, the life and joy of bygone days, is now resurrected in his memories and runs cheerily among the roses of the garden, laughing, picking the flowers, chasing butterflies.

Job sighs. "Ah, my little Masina, my beloved child, you were our pride and joy."

The beauty of the fleeting scene is lost in the anguish of the words he now utters. "Masina is no more."

Suddenly a new day comes, and the debate, interrupted by the night and exhaustion, is resumed. "Compose yourself and be strong," he says in an inaudible whisper.

Chapter 27 indicates just such a break in the speech: "Then Job resumed his discourse."

"I swear by God, who has denied me justice,
and by the Almighty, who has filled me with bitterness:
so long as there is any life left in me
and God's breath is in my nostrils,
no untrue word shall pass my lips
and my tongue shall utter no falsehood" (verses 2-4, N.E.B.).

It was a magnificent resolve, which he strictly followed, but here again he repeats a misconception of God's part in his misery. However, God did not come down and correct his mistake—that was left for later. The sufferer, in order to develop patience, had to wait for time to unravel the tangled threads of his confused thinking.

He begins to talk about God's prescription for the wicked—trouble and punishment in the due process of time.

Job's three opponents cast meaningful glances at one another as if to say, "Well, isn't that exactly what we've been trying to tell him—he's finally coming around to it."

But their thinking and what Job had in mind were two dif-

ferent things. Certainly God will make the wicked pay for his evil deeds, claimed the Uzite, but don't be too hasty in identifying the sinner or timing the event.

These men didn't know how to deal with trouble and misfortune. They would destroy the cockroaches by burning down the house, and in the process leave men without shelter or comfort from the atrocious elements of despair.

The California desert is an inspiring and enjoyable place if properly handled, but it can be dangerous when one goes there inadequately equipped. There have been many instances of people driving off the beaten track with no water and then becoming stalled in sand. They panic and step hard on the accelerator, spinning the wheels deeper into the sand; then, removing most of their clothes, they set out in the hot sun to find help. After hours of confused wandering they collapse and are finally found dead by a search party that first went to the abandoned car after it had been spotted from an airplane.

Wearing loose clothes protects from the sun—the Arabs learned that thousands of years ago. In nearly every case a stranded person should stay by the car, keeping in its shade, and if severe dehydration sets in moisten his clothes with water from the radiator.

Yet the desert, treacherous and often misunderstood, with all its troublesome features, can be turned to great advantage. The vast oasis of Imperial Valley and the plush garden city of Palm Springs are examples. In the past, hardy prospectors, defying danger and enduring hardship, located rich mineral deposits. The first gold discovered in California was found in the bleak mountains of Imperial County. The silver of Calico, near Barstow, became famous for great wealth and exciting adventure.

In chapter 28 Job says, "Surely there is a vein for the silver." The implication is that careful search, toil, and endurance will uncover the precious metal. Gold too, he states, is extracted from the ore by the refining process. First the ore is crushed and then the yellow metal is separated from the worthless material.

Job could have thought about this while undergoing his

own refining process of trial and suffering. He perhaps had seen many sun-burned places turned by patient toil into desert gardens or witnessed a valuable mine producing riches from a blistering spot men would have once termed absolutely worthless.

So man, he goes on to say, digs riches from the earth and does other profitable wise things with nature, but where shall genuine wisdom be found? It's a priceless element among mortals and few have the prized possession. He, no doubt, didn't include his critics among those who had it. He lists the precious minerals, from the gold of Ophir to the brilliant sapphire—these are the prizes men seek—but this rare thing called wisdom, this choice ingredient that lifts discreet men above brutish beasts—what really is it?

"The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?" Job answers his question in the last verse of this excellent discussion of natural history:

"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

In other words, in spite of man's vast understanding of nature and his triumphs in extracting its secrets, the ways of Providence are supremely important even though man finds it hard sometimes to understand the divine purpose and design.

So Job looked at the spacious skies and proclaimed the great Original. The purple mountain majesties towering over the fruited plain reminded him that far above the blue ethereal skies, dwelling majestically in the spangled heavens, One reigned who ruled all nature and the destiny of every man. Time alone would vindicate His tried and suffering servant.

Here and there, in the remainder of this book I will present vignettes of what I like to call the Golden Patina of El Centro. They are a series of mini-biographies interpreting Job in a computerized world, each showing how the ancient sage can come alive in people living today.

A patina is a film on any surface and may be composed of various materials—gold plate, silvery sheen, copper oxide, et cetera. On the desert it appears as a dark stain covering rocks and is often called "desert varnish."

Our El Centro patina, to be analogical, refers to observations I made in one small church where typical men and women patiently acquired a golden sheen covering their hard-core experiences of life. It could represent the Joblike encounters of practically everyone—although only several people from this one group are used to confirm the point that the Uzite was a projection, albeit magnified, of the whole troubled human race. The important thing to keep in mind is the final advantage each gains from his own particular contest with adversity.

Churches, schools, governments, and homes have their problems. But all of these collective bodies are made up of individuals whose keen personal problems make up the corporate whole. So, no matter how we look at trouble it is reduced to a personal involvement—and often to each person the situation seems monstrous.

People have perplexing difficulties but Job offers a final satisfactory solution. Nations have baffling confrontations that affect every citizen, but the leaders who wisely choose the principles laid down in Job gain great advantages. Churches always stand to gain when members patiently seek the guidelines God gave the world through Job.

The Golden Patina of El Centro, with its personal implications, in each individual case proved far more valuable than the shining vein of silver or the sparkling piece of pure gold Job saw gleaming in the crystal sunlight. Probably that is exactly what the ancient sage of Uz had in mind when he spoke the immortal words.

“A Robe and a Diadem”

JOB'S CHAPTER OF memories begins with an impassioned cry for the happy days now gone forever! “Oh that I were as . . . when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me” (Job 29:2-5).

Upon the strength of this plea we shall now reconstruct those happier days as the sage of Uz saw them in his dream of a lost splendor and prosperity.

A cry of joy and ecstasy rose in the city as the great man, loved by all, came down the street.

“Yes, it is he; he is coming!”

Old men stood; young men lowered their heads respectfully, and silence fell over everyone, as is becoming in the presence of one greatly honored, when Job approached.

At the public square in Uz a meeting was called to decide an important matter that would have a vital bearing on many living within the corporate bounds. Job, the most prudent, the citizen of greatest repute, would preside as usual.

As he entered the public place three children, selected because of their charming personalities, came to him with a bouquet of flowers from the gardens of grateful citizens. One of the children, an orphan, addressed Job.

“We bless you, oh father, because you helped us when we were hungry.”

Job thought how beautiful it was to be thus greeted. He

looked into the innocent face of the girl and said, "God bless you, my dear child, and how is your mother? Is she feeling better?"

"Oh yes, my lord. Since you came and helped us my mother's heart has been singing for joy."

The family had not known what to do after the father died. When Job heard about the tragedy he commanded servants to gather food and, searching out the humble dwelling, he took care of their needs. The family was well known in the small city and the deed came to the attention of many people.

A murmur of approval swept over the crowd as the flowers were presented. Some stood there who had been threatened with ruin before Job came to their aid. Indeed, he had been eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the needy.

A stranger spoke to a local person standing beside him.

"I was hungry and travel worn when I came here the other day. No one would help me, but when I was sent to Job's house he received me like a lost brother."

"Ah, you are right," replied the man beside him. "He is that kind of person."

As Job called the meeting to order, the name of a miscreant was cited. This wicked man had issued a heartless order that would have adversely affected a number of families.

One of the nobles rose to excuse the course this man had taken. "Those people have no right to stay in the houses he wants to raze."

"But they will pay rent and this rich man doesn't need to use the property," protested another of the city fathers.

"No matter," said the first; "out with them. Give him a permit to go ahead."

Job rose and gave his opinion. Human need transcended mere profit or personal likes and dislikes, he argued.

Everyone listened expectantly and waited in silence for his opinion. His words fell like gentle dew and men took heart.

"Listen to me," he said. "I'll buy the property myself. I'll give more than it's worth and those needy people can still live there at low rentals. Moreover, I'll help them fix up the place so it won't be such an eyesore any longer."

No one spoke again, but after his offer was accepted everyone left the meeting—including the rich man—with words of praise for him. In truth he "broke the fangs of the miscreant and rescued the prey from his teeth" (29:17, N.E.B.).

Righteousness clothed him as a beautiful garment; as he said, "My judgment was as a robe and a diadem" (29:14). Those were the happy days and now his mind dwelt fondly on them.

Suddenly a pathetic contrast came as Job changed the pace. He quits his hidden haven of dreams—one cannot live on fantasies—and comes back to reality. What happened next can readily be constructed from the thirtieth chapter.

The sweet blandishments of life quickly evaporate and outrageous misfortune takes over. Friends who once showed great respect turn a cold shoulder; the time-serving heap contempt and scorn upon the head of him they once flattered. The waters of life turn brackish with the salt of Job's tears as deep woe engulfs his soul.

A subculture of debased people living in the ghetto of the city fling themselves upon him; it gives them a morbid chance to insult a member of the social class they despise. These are the people, says Job, "whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock" (30:1).

Job's fortunes have sunk so low that he has become the laughingstock of these degraded people who heap ridicule upon him. Many of these very people, driven from the society of men into the wilds, throw off all restraint and attack Job's person and property. They are—

"Vile base-born wretches,
hounded from the haunts of men.
Now I have become the target of their taunts,
my name is a byword among them.
They loathe me, they shrink from me,
they dare to spit in my face" (30:8-10, N.E.B.).

Job's spirit disintegrates as he continues the speech. By this time his three friends begin to feel sorry for him but not to the degree that they will stand up and support him. Crushed and battered, the wounded Uzite continues—

"Terror upon terror overwhelms me,

it sweeps away my resolution like the wind,
and my hope of victory vanishes like a cloud.
So now my soul is in turmoil within me,
and misery has me daily in its grip.
By night pain pierces my very bones,
and there is ceaseless throbbing in my veins" (30:15-17, N.E.B.).

Job's tears would have produced a river.

"God himself has flung me down in the mud, no better than dust or ashes," he laments (30:19, N.E.B.).

But he still appeals to God for help on the basis of his compassion toward others in former days. "Did I not weep for the man whose life was hard? Did not my heart grieve for the poor?" (verse 25, N.E.B.). Here Job's steadfast confidence in God and his refusal to be utterly disorganized by trouble comes through. He fought back in a fashion that Shakespeare mentions in *Hamlet*.

"Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them."

Job knew that God who sits enthroned above the skies would eventually—just how, he could not comprehend—bring all that is good and beautiful to him.

That, too, was the faith that sustained Doris Wittlake as the Golden Patina of El Centro glowed in splendor upon her. She was enjoying life with her three children and a loving husband, a teacher of the church school in the Imperial Valley city, when hard-rock trouble struck a staggering blow.

William (Bill), her husband, and leader of the Pathfinders, a church-related youth organization, was taking a group of youth from a religious meeting when another vehicle rammed into his car, crushing him to death against a light pole.

I saw Doris and the three small children at the home of her parents in Loma Linda, California, soon after the tragedy. Words were inadequate to express our sympathy. Doris, though utterly broken, kept a Joblike attitude through the whole tragic experience. She still believed that God was a beautiful necessity in every human need. Some time later a good man named John came along and offered to become a husband and a father to the

stricken family. They asked me to join them in wedlock. A new day began for Doris.

A few years later I again met Doris and John in Loma Linda with three of their now four children (the youngest was born to the second marriage). The two teen-agers present were obviously devoted to the new family. One son, who was old enough at the time of his father's death to fully realize the tragedy, was now overseas engaged in missionary work.

Some tender memories, of course, still lingered in her mind for William. But Doris told me about her present happiness—John Komarniski had proved a real godsend.

Zophar would have pointed the finger of scorn—"leave it alone, God is punishing her." Job stood for something entirely different. "Comfort her, give a helping hand. The devil has delivered a crushing blow but God will not forsake her. Just give Him enough time."

That, in brief, constituted the substance of the great debate, and what happened to Doris was the sweet essence of the Golden Patina.

The Man From Buz

JOB'S STANCE IN chapter 31 fits in remarkably well with the poetic lines:

"Assail'd by scandal and the tongue of strife,
His only answer was, a blameless life."

Job represented the blameless life, though popular opinion pinned evil on him after misfortune shattered his fame and fortune.

To fall into sin is human, to dwell in it is inexcusable, to grieve over it is Christlike, and to turn from it is Godlike. Job's formula would nip sin in the bud—that is, in a man's thought. Said he:

"I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1).

He knew very well that the overt act begins in the mind. On this point his friends remained silent, none even wagged his head, for the scandal of impurity could never be put at Job's door. Having reminded his critics of his moral integrity, he again refers to his reputation as a generous man, especially toward orphans and widows.

And don't any of you think I have been greedy or covetous, he seems to say. Andrew Carnegie, a multimillionaire, once said, "The man who dies rich dies disgraced." Job had used his immense wealth to relieve suffering and human need. Wealth was a means, not an end.

"If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence; if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because mine hand had gotten much; . . . I should have denied the God that is above" (31:24-28).

Moreover, he emphatically affirmed: "If I am guilty of wrong or of these false accusations made by friends and enemies, then 'let thistles grow instead of wheat.'"

There was an eloquent finality in what he said as the great debate came to an end. "The words of Job are ended" (31:40).

The grand sage of Uz, the wise philosopher, the man of integrity and patience, held his claim of innocence to the end, though he swayed between despair and hope. God had hurt him, he felt, but he still trusted his Creator. The debate led to some profound conclusions but the situation still called for a satisfactory solution. Only God could straighten out the tangled threads.

A crusty, burned out, deathlike condition can be amazingly transformed by the essential element that produces life and prosperity. Early pioneers suffered greatly while crossing the one hundred miles from the Colorado River to the mountains on the west. This fearsome stretch in southern California, known as Imperial Valley, was a treacherous desert that took a toll of many lives and caused extreme suffering. No drinking water could be found in the entire valley.

Even when development of the notorious valley began many experts wrote it off as worthless because of the salt content in the soil. But determined men fought against great obstacles and after many tribulations transformed the blazing desert into one of the most prolific garden areas of the world. The 500,000 acres under irrigation produce more than \$200 million in crops every year. In this fantastic agricultural empire some crop ripens for harvest the year round. Moreover, modern air conditioning makes the intense summer heat bearable for the residents, and the winter climate, with endless sunshine, is nearly ideal.

Throughout his crushing troubles, when Job's lot seemed as barren as the old Imperial desert, he held steadfastly to his inherent worth. He contended for the proposition that when a man is down he isn't necessarily out. Don't keep him down by

unjust methods and critical attitudes. Lift him up; provide help and understanding—the thing Job pleaded for and didn't get. Reconstruct. The whole national system of social justice and the basic principle of the church's mission is based on this concept that Job fought for. His violently argumentative opposites missed the point completely. The Uzite couldn't break through their prejudice and bias.

Then another personality appears to provide a rebuttal, more or less. This mysterious figure named Elihu was apparently born in Buz, for his father is termed a Buzite, an inhabitant of a place presumably founded by one of Abraham's nephews.

A younger man than the others, he has listened to the debate, noting the inconclusive stalemate. He is deeply perturbed because Job justified himself rather than God. Also his ire is raised against the three friends who found no answer to the Uzite's arguments, yet condemned him.

Therefore Elihu takes the stand, promising something new. He comes with the idea of straightening out everyone, including the bystanders who, no doubt, had gathered in considerable numbers to hear the discussion.

Pointing toward the three who had been confounded by Job's argument, he said, "They stand there and no longer answer."

Silence falls over the assemblage; evidently everyone wants to hear what this personable young philosopher, who has been silently listening, will say.

"Well, listen to me," he says with a tone and manner suggesting strong conviction. "I will not string words together like you. . . . I, too, have a furrow to plough" (32:14, 17, N.E.B.).

Since he had observed the amenities of youth in the presence of age, the three previous speakers and Job did not resent his boldness. Besides, the debate had become an international, theological, and intellectual forum. The speakers were outstanding philosophers from five different countries or cities.

Curious eyes fastened upon this handsome young nobleman from Buz who presented such a striking appearance. A man of strong emotions, keen discernment, and intense convictions, he

could hardly keep still until he deemed the proper time to speak had come. Now he poured forth a thundering volley of words.

"I will express my opinion;
for I am bursting with words,
a bellyful of wind gripes me.
My stomach is distended as if with wine,
bulging like a blacksmith's bellows;
I must speak to find relief,
I must open my mouth and answer;
I will show no favour to anyone" (32:17-21, N.E.B.).

This Patrick Henry-like speech amounted to a declaration of theological freedom. Job's affliction came as a workshop of human experience. The Golden Patina, millenniums later, served as a demonstration of life's realities—sometimes painful—played out in the little church of El Centro at the heart of famous Imperial Valley.

Alex and Mary Monteith, she a wisdom-dispensing member of the church board, live in Ocotillo, a little community on the California desert twenty-seven miles west of El Centro.

The irrigated fields end at Dixieland on the West Side Canal, halfway to Ocotillo. At that point the desert begins with a vengeance.

But there was no desert in the hearts of the Monteiths as we sat in their comfortable home, discussing events of a past that had been spent in church-related institutional work, both at home and abroad. They gave many years of leadership, he in fiscal administration, she in nursing education. During their long service there were many evidences of the guidance of God.

"The Lord led in everything," said Mary. "Every step was guided. Everything worked out for the best during those happy years."

Almost instinctively our eyes turned toward Alex as she added one qualifying remark. "Only one thing is not yet solved."

Parkinson's disease—shaking palsy—had taken a heavy toll. But there was no bitterness or defeatism. "Someday we shall understand."

Alex was fighting back: he walked a mile every day (walking

under those circumstances is not easy) hoping to prevent the disease from immobilizing his body.

"Why does a good man's life have to end this way?" is a question often asked. The Monteiths could give no satisfactory answer, but their confidence and courage remained unshaken.

Why?

The question is a vast continent of mysterious human experiences. The boundaries, profiles, and contours cannot be precisely defined. But Job and the Monteiths felt there would be a good and satisfactory definition. The geodetic lines of providence are well drawn; ultimately they will stand complete and perfect.

Elder Monteith was deprived of many normal activities, but his wife could drive the car anywhere and direct affairs in a manner to provide essential needs. Apparently it was left with them as in Paul's case: "My grace is sufficient for thee." After spending a billion years in a painless eternity, five, ten, or twenty years will seem like a grain of sand on all the seashores of the world.

I remember Alex back in our college years. His Scotch ancestry stood out, and his flair to get things done made him a canny, popular student. During the subsequent years he became a leader of men; but now he was consigned to a state of semi-invalidism. Yet one could plainly see the Golden Patina shining on the rocks of frustration and enforced retirement from many of the normal activities of life.

Job fought for a sympathetic understanding of such unexplainable mysteries. His patience and that of the Monteiths defined the way men can react to life's pains, problems, and disappointments.

What Ever Happened to Huz and Buz?

HIS FATHER'S NAME was Barachel, the Buzite. Elihu was therefore a citizen of Buz, and this suggests a facet of ancient history. Is it not reasonable to assume that the city or principality of Buz was founded by a man of the same name? A son of Nahor the brother of Abraham?

Buz had an older brother, Huz; they were the first two sons of Nahor who stayed behind in Haran when Abraham continued on his pilgrimage from Ur to the Promised Land. Nahor, the man who went halfway, also clung to some of the old idols while still professing the true faith.

One result of Nahor's lack of foresight was that Huz and Buz are lost in the records of ancient greatness. What ever happened to them? No one knows. They certainly are not among the celebrated names of antiquity that included their cousin, Isaac. Halfway is not enough; it can either end in infamy or in oblivion. That is the lesson of Huz and Buz—and their father's lack of courage.

Job represented the kind who would dare and die for truth, the Abraham type, ready to endure any hardship rather than displease God. The three so-called comforters stand for those who are confronted by truth yet refuse to yield. Like most of this kind, they opposed and criticized the one who did. Elihu, identified somewhat with the Nahor-Buz type, might be cited as the typical compromiser. He was the man in between who re-

jected the reasoning of the three out-and-out opponents but could not accept Job's position.

The pace of the discussion moderates as Elihu begins to speak. The venomous tone, unsubstantiated attacks, and harassing tactics are dropped in favor of a more objective attitude.

Blaming God doesn't help matters, points out the son of the Buzite. He mildly reproaches Job for doing so. "Behold, in this thou art not just" (Job 33:12). He lays down some basic facts:

It is futile to contend with God.

The Deity does what He knows is best.

He doesn't have to explain His actions.

God is a merciful Father.

Fathers often withhold explanations when they know it is best for their children.

We can see Elihu as tall, with a long pointed nose and glittering eyes. He was no doubt a demanding perfectionist, while adhering quite closely to the facts of the case.

"Listen to me," he says. "I will teach you wisdom."

The young philosopher, usually on the side of the angels, felt he had an intuition for assessing the real problem and methodically applying the solution. He declares that "man learns his lesson on a bed of pain."

Then he recites for emphasis the distressing condition of Job. Probably there was a note of compassion in the tone of his voice.

"Tormented by a ceaseless ague in his bones;

he turns from his food with loathing

and has no relish for the choicest meats;

his flesh hangs loose upon him,

his bones are loosened and out of joint,

his soul draws near to the pit,

his life to the ministers of death" (33:19-22, N.E.B.).

Elihu comprehends the meaning of pain and he goes on to tell Job that after the chastisement is over and the discipline accomplished the work of restoration will set in, both physical and spiritual. "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth."

It is an encouraging prospect Elihu holds before the afflicted

Uzite. Joy and success will follow the bitter days of pain and sorrow. Somehow men grow stronger by the suffering they endure.

Job stirred rather uneasily. He made an effort to stand, the suggestion of an inclination to say something written on the intense expression of his face.

Elihu lifted his hand, kindly it seemed, and half closed his eyes, urging, "Be silent, and I myself will speak" (33:31, N.E.B.). Yet wishing to be courteous, he gave Job a chance to interrupt: "If thou hast any thing to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee."

Job checked the impulse to speak. After all, Elihu was telling the truth. Any attempt to amplify the remarks, which obviously fit the case, would be redundant. To refute them would be self-defeating. So Job sat down again and listened patiently, appreciative, at least, that Elihu seemed determined to be objective and fair.

Some facts have to be faced even if they are disagreeable. The desert surrounding Uz presented this kind of challenge. It exists on all deserts, including the burning wastes of Imperial County in California. But the torturing desert often becomes a haven of healing and health to some people. The very dryness and lifeless conditions turn out to be a blessing.

One of my desert friends said, "Look at me." She arose springing from her chair and walked around as limber as a child.

"Before we came to the desert," she said, "my arthritis was so bad I had to be lifted out of the chair."

The beneficial results of the dry climate have often been dramatically applied to those suffering from respiratory difficulties.

We could regard Elihu as carrying the analogy into the difficulties of life, and so far he has done very well. But that was only the beginning of his discussion. Now, in the thirty-fourth chapter, a cloud suddenly appears on the horizon; he falls into the mischievous pattern his predecessors set.

"What man is like Job," he cries, "who drinketh up scorning like water?"

The facts of the matter, in Elihu's estimation, overshadowed every other consideration, therefore the sufferer's contention remained invalid and his opponents lacked understanding.

Job "goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men," asserts the son of the Buzite.

All of a sudden Elihu's song has changed; Job is taken aback. All right, then, let this young exponent of God have his say.

How do we know you're wrong, Job? Well, it's all very simple. Just look at yourself—you're a sight to behold. Isn't that proof conclusive of God's wrath and of your rejection?

Moreover, Elihu points to a serious weakness—this time partially correct in his deductions—of Job's reactions: "For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God" (34:9).

Elihu scans the entire assemblage and loudly pontificates: "Hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity."

True, Elihu, true. But you have overstated the case insofar as Job is concerned.

It's an example of imputing guilt for its own sake without sufficient justification. To carry this theory to its illogical conclusion would be to assign all men to the torture chambers of God's wrath, for every man suffers. No doubt it would even hit Elihu in the days ahead.

Yet let us listen to the son of the Buzite: he does propound some profound thinking:

"His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. . . . He heareth the cry of the afflicted. When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?"

But, beholden to his own theology, like the others, he spoils it all with a vicious attack. Apparently his moderation gives way to a heated brain as he continues to fan the flame within him. A man loses his moderation when he tries to bolster a weak position.

"Men of good sense will say,
any intelligent hearer will tell me,

'Job talks with no knowledge,
and there is no sense in what he says.
If only Job could be put to the test once and for all
for answers that are meant to make mischief!
He is a sinner and a rebel as well
with his endless ranting against God'" (34:34-37,
N.E.B.).

His intemperate remark struck at Job's avowed purpose to protect himself against false charges, from the injury of downgrading someone merely on the unreliable grounds of appearances or assumptions. He gave credence to the fact that somehow God would vindicate him, that trouble would lead eventually to a good end.

Forever golden, too, was the shining Patina of El Centro in the troubles of Mary Tichenor, a music teacher in the public schools of Imperial Valley. (Her piano playing in the church cheered me.)

Years ago, after the trauma of a divorce, she began teaching in Tennessee. But she became ill and teaching at times was difficult. Then the superintendent of schools seemed to take a dislike to her, making life more miserable. Everything combined to worsen her illness.

As Mary lay in her bed one discouraging day she cried, "Lord, let me die. There is nothing to live for. Please let me die." She had reached the low point Job knew all about. Just then the telephone rang. She heard a friend's voice at the other end.

"Mary, we have been thinking about you, sick and alone up there in that lonely apartment. We think you should go to Takoma Hospital at Greeneville (Tennessee)."

Her friend went on to say that the hospital belonged to Seventh-day Adventists but that that didn't matter if they could help her.

Religion appealed to Mary Tichenor, anyway, she being the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. Well, Mary went to the hospital three times during that winter.

"This is heaven!" she said to herself as she lay in the hospital bed.

Mary wanted to know about the religion of these people who were doing so much for her. She read every book she could lay her hands on.

"I'm going to join your church," Mary said to one of the startled doctors after she had been in and out of the hospital for about two months.

"Yes, you can join. But you must be sure to know what it's all about," he replied.

"Well, I'll learn," she vowed.

Now, years later in El Centro, she gracefully wears the Golden Patina. Her health is still not the best but she is happy and contented, a successful teacher, a blessing to the church, a joy to her friends.

Elihu had said, "He will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose" (34:33). Mary chose to let God lead her through all of life's changing fortunes. Now she wouldn't trade the satisfaction that has come to her for anything the world can offer.

"It's the best thing that ever happened to me!"

“Songs in the Night”

HOW DO YOU heighten the elegance of an already elegant night?

One adds the ingredient of enjoyment: pleasant words, for instance, instead of the harsh burning kind that only create shadows of despair. Pouring scalding water on a man looking at the beauty of the starry skies is no way to heighten his sense of elegance.

Elihu had a chance to discard verbal toxins and pour on the suffering Uzite a soothing lotion of smooth, comforting words, reflecting warmth and mercy. He made an initial investment in such an undertaking when his speech began. But he failed to develop it as he went along. Job had heard enough verbal bankruptcy already.

“A good man may suffer the same as an evil man,” that man had tried to say. “He will be rewarded in the end. But that end may be in heaven, not necessarily in this world, although that too often happens.”

“What you say offends us,” was the attitude of his three friends, and now of Elihu too. Elihu felt God reigns far above, away from man and his needs. An iron law of legalistic justice grips the whole earth. God is too exalted to stoop to listen when mere humans grovel in pain. Men like Job cannot say that God hears in the night of suffering.

“But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth

songs in the night. . . . They cry, but none giveth answer. . . . Surely God will not hear."

Job, why doesn't God hear your desperate cry? queries Elihu. Ah, it's quite obvious. God doesn't hear an empty cry. And, Job, listen carefully to this. Your cry is empty, as empty as a bucket with holes in it. If you had a right spirit God would give you songs in the night.

The Uzite had been crushed—definitely. The three critics had rubbed salt into his misery. Now Elihu casts off his initial restraint and pours boiling sulphur as it were, on the anguished victim. One more dash of brimstone makes the insult complete as the talk stops for a brief intermission:

"Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain; he multiplieth words without knowledge."

The dramatic forum centered on the attitude people take toward their fellow men. Likes and dislikes on a personal, creedal, or racial basis were involved in the opposing positions. The Uzite pleaded for giving the other fellow a good chance, a fair deal. To shut a man away from God by shattering his faith is about as serious a blow as one can strike. Friendliness, understanding, mutual trust, helpfulness, along with faith in God, are what disadvantaged or suffering people need.

Elihu offered a little, but precious little, to Job—and consequently to the whole human family. He was the kind who would appear in church with a scowl and never offer a smile to anyone, not even to God. Yet he was a perfectionist, demanding that every songbook be in precisely the right place. A good resolve indeed—but the sweet nectar of human kindness and thoughtfulness was also needed.

Extract sweetness from a bristling desert? Why, yes, indeed. The sharper the needles, the sweeter the blooming flowers. And despised places have been turned into wonderful gardens of beauty.

Take the Salton Sea, for instance, once despised and rejected just about like Job. For years people passed by the big inland sea in a rush to reach rich Imperial Valley a few miles to the south, or the lush date gardens of Coachella Valley just to the north.

Came the day when imaginative men cast understanding eyes upon the liquid Cinderella of the desert sparkling under an eternal sun. Fish were introduced by the California Department of Fish and Game. Salmon fingerlings to the number of 15,000 were planted, but the water, which rises to 90 degrees in the torrid summer, killed every one. Then the department tried the corvina, in 1950. The corvina population exploded. Seven years later these magnificent silver-and-bronze beauties, often weighing up to twenty pounds or more and sometimes three feet long, numbered one million!

I saw a whole school, covering an area of about five acres, swim by as I stood on the shore. I'll never forget the fascinating sight.

The State established an excellent park that extends for many miles along the north shore. Today vast throngs come, and the day is in sight when a million vacationers will camp annually on the shores of the huge desert sea men once regarded as worthless. Resorts and winter homes—even air-conditioned summer homes—are rising along the bone-dry areas surrounding this striking desert attraction.

I have driven by it scores of times and its beauty never ceases to charm me. Sometimes the sunsets are unsurpassed. Yet this charming wonder of the desert came the hard way. Salton Sea suffered insults, rejection, and scorn before men realized the wonder of it all.

You might call it the Job of California's Colorado desert. The ancient man and the modern sea suffered rejection and misunderstanding before the thrilling day of triumph finally came.

Elihu proceeds in chapter 36 to propound the greatness of God. "Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength and wisdom."

He opens human ears to discipline. He commands men to turn from iniquity. Obey and prosper and—because there is wrath—beware.

The only way men can learn, maintains Elihu, is by suffering—all of this directed especially toward Job. Yet the son of the Buzite takes a better view than the other friends. They affirmed God took vengeance upon Job, a confirmed sinner. Not

so, claimed Elihu: he is being chastized by God for his faults as a father punishes a child. Therefore, Job, learn your lesson.

However, the admonition, though profitable, needed some tempering. Job, in the extremity of agony, required some comforting and assurance. He needed healing more than preaching.

Elihu then comes to the keynote of his speech: "Behold, God is great, and we know him not." Magnify His works, exalt His power, for He made all things.

It was all very good as far as he went. But God also must be extolled for His mercy, His compassion, His love, and kindness. He heals the wounded, He comforts the brokenhearted. These, too, are the things that cause men to sing songs in the night.

The trouble lay not so much in what Elihu and the other men said but in what they did not say or do.

The great debate took place in a desert setting—and there is much also that needs to be said in favor of deserts. Often, of course, they are enigmas. The tarnished veneer is there as well as the Golden Patinas. The impression of pain, suffering, and death appears to predominate. As in the book of Job, the negative is easy to find but one can look beneath the surface appearance and discover real merit.

Jack Fell, the El Centro Sabbath school superintendent, ex-boxer, and butcher, part-time miner, and an authentic desert man, knew the desert in that area, I believe, as well as anyone alive.

One warm evening on the desert he opened his sleeping bag and later crawled into it for a welcome night's sleep. But he had company. And the intruder gave him some acute trouble, a big sleep-shattering pain. A sidewinder rattlesnake had also decided to take advantage of the comfortable sleeping bag.

Awaking from sleep, Jack felt a sharp pain and heard the snake's terrifying rattle. The reptile followed him as he sprang up, imbedding its fangs deeply into the right side of his back.

But his initial panic quickly gave way to calm thinking. The use of a tourniquet, bleeding by incision, or other first aid was impossible because of the bite's position on his body. Remembering that fright or locomotion is the wrong thing to do,

he simply lay down and went to sleep for the rest of the night.

The next day he sought medical aid. By then a large area on his back had turned purple, but he soon recovered without any serious results. Fell's was a short time of intense trouble, yet really only a pinprick compared to Job's huge accumulation of troubles—but his concern at the time seemed real enough.

Actually, the small sidewinder is not as lethal as some larger rattlesnakes. For that matter, the venomous snakes of America are statistically less dangerous than a bathtub. More die from the latter. Mosquitoes, claims Laurence Klauber, consulting curator of reptiles at the San Diego Zoo, are 1,000 times more dangerous. And lightning causes more deaths in the United States than snake bites. Rattlesnakes bite about one thousand people annually, of whom only thirty die from the bite.

Jack Fell knew a snake had bitten him. Yet, as in so many other things, he wore a mantle of faith and trust.

"Did you ever feel like Job?" I once asked him.

"Oh yes," he answered, "but my troubles have been small beside his."

"Yet at the time you must have felt they were almost as big," I ventured.

"Yes, I'll admit that, but as in the case of the sidewinder, calm trust brought me through much better than worry or panic would have."

Call it the Golden Patina—or songs in the night—it is a good formula for better living.

Elihu took all the pains and troubles of life, including the monumental trials of Job, and brought them into fine focus: "Therefore trust thou in him" (Job 35:14).

Who Is the Rain's Father?

JAMES RESTON, THE noted editor and columnist, wrote a column about world troubles that bears a striking resemblance to Job's debate at Uz.

"Everyone Is Getting a Pull at Uncle Sam's Whiskers" is the title of Mr. Reston's article.*

"These are hard days on Uncle Sam. In Asia, the Old Gentleman is denounced as an imperialist, and in Europe as an isolationist.

"One place it is said he is too rich and powerful, the other that he is too poor and tired to play his historic role in the world.

"In Peking and Moscow, they say they want him to go home, and in Tokyo, Bonn, Paris, and London they're afraid he will.

"Meanwhile, the voices of America shout at him both to stand steady and pull back, and President Nixon, rugged this way and that, does one thing one day and another the next, trying to keep some kind of balance.

"If you wander around the capitals of the world these days and listen to the propaganda and watch the people, one thing is fairly clear. All governments are in trouble.

"They cannot deal with the complexities of modern life or meet the expectations of their people, try as they might,

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whether under the democratic, socialist, or communist systems.

"There are simply too many problems, but it is easy to find excuses or devils, and the most prominent of these now is Uncle Sam."

The similarity is this: the debate at Uz also revolved around the problem of trouble and man's way of coping with it. The debaters sought a common answer though their philosophies were basically different.

In Elihu's extended speech he voices fear of God's manifestations in the wild rampages of nature. "My heart trembleth. . . . God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend" (Job 37:1-5).

The snow, the rain, frost, and storm, argued Elihu, serve God's purpose: "He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy." The son of the Buzite didn't go as far as the other three. But he probably had in mind that the storm that slew Job's children was God's way of correcting him.

Elihu contended that it was a matter of discipline for man's own good, but Job held that the training was too severe, and as for the contention of his opponents, why correction when he stood innocent of their charges?

In this world no one can be sure of escaping trouble. Sometimes it comes as double trouble but there always seems to be some redeeming feature or hidden benefit.

Steve McRee, 20, and William Howsman, 19, found their vacation disrupted by a rain-soaked night at the top of majestic Half Dome in Yosemite National Park.

As the two were descending the steep side of the mountain a blinding flash of lightning struck nearby and sent McRee for a 500-foot fall down the slope. Some boulders stopped him on the edge of a sheer cliff. Had he not been stopped, the drop probably would have ended his life.

"I don't remember anything about the tumble down the mountain," he said in the hospital where he was taken for two broken knees, a broken ankle and right wrist. Yet Steve McRee was alive and probably did some serious thinking about life while lying on his hospital bed.

"Listen, Job." Elihu began to admonish him to some serious

thinking about his troubles and to reconsider the thoughts he entertained concerning God. Consider God's wonderful works; maybe that, Job, will teach you something you ought to know about yourself. This was probably the intent of Elihu's remarks.

Looking disdainfully upon the troubled man almost everyone had come to despise, he spoke about Job's appearance, "sweating there in your stifling clothes" (37:17, N.E.B.).

It was part of an otherwise good question directed toward Job: "Do you know why the clouds hang poised overhead, a wonderful work of his consummate skill?" (37:16, N.E.B.).

So, you see, Job, it follows that man simply cannot explain the mysteries of the Infinite. (You had better take my advice, acknowledge your sins, get down on your knees, and repent.) God reigns in unapproachable majesty and power far above man and his earthly needs.

"But the Almighty we cannot find; his power is beyond our ken,

and his righteousness not slow to do justice.

Therefore mortal men pay him reverence,

and all who are wise look to him" (37:23, 24, N.E.B.).

Thus Elihu ended his speech—and the debate—with a flourish of noble sentiments. But the great question in hand remained unresolved. At least, he gave the discussion, often quite acidic, a finale of moderation and factual candor.

The lines of truth and illumination in a night of confusion were not as clearly revealed as when Jack Fell took a carload of people, followed by another car, from El Centro toward a spring in the desert. His car reached the goal but the other car turned back before getting there and did not return home. As hours passed it became increasingly clear that the group was lost and that another desert tragedy might be in the making.

The sheriff decided a search could not be made until the next morning.

"But a two-year-old baby is out there," objected Jack Fell. The sheriff refused to budge.

"I'll go myself."

"Then," replied the officer, "we'll have two lost parties."

"I know that desert like a book. Give me a stone from any

spot and I'll tell you where it came from—there's no danger of my getting lost."

Jack drove his jeep to a high spot in the area, aimed his headlights in the direction he thought the lost people would likely be, and kept blinking the lights. After a while he saw the reflection of a spotlight on a mountain several miles away.

The driver of the lost car had sensibly faced it toward the steep side of the mountain. Telling one of the party to wait for instructions, he had climbed a nearby hill to watch for someone who would see his signal.

When he saw Jack's blinking lights the driver called, "Switch the spotlight on and off."

Jack Fell reached the lost people without difficulty. As he drove up they cried out, "Jack, we knew you'd find us!"

A rescue was needed also in Job's beleaguered situation. Nothing had been resolved by debate and reasoning; if anything, human logic only compounded Job's distress. Now a most dramatic thing happened. God Himself intervened.

Elihu had closed his arguments with a reference to clouds, wind, and rain. As if in rebuttal, God sent an awe-inspiring tempest. Then out of the swirling elements came the sublime words of majestic sweetness and gentle reproof:

"Who is this whose ignorant words
cloud my design in darkness?
Brace yourself and stand up like a man;
I will ask questions, and you shall answer.
Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?
Tell me, if you know and understand.
Who settled its dimensions? Surely you should know.
Who stretched his measuring-line over it?
On what do its supporting pillars rest?
Who set its corner-stone in place,
when the morning stars sang together
and all the sons of God shouted aloud?
Who watched over the birth of the sea,
when it burst in flood from the womb?" (38:2-8, N.E.B.).

The divine interrogation posed searching questions:

"In all your life have you ever called upon the dawn or shown the morning its place?"

"Have you descended to the springs of the sea?"

"Have the gates of death been revealed to you" (do you know your way in and out of its mysteries)?

"Have you comprehended the vast expanse of the world?"

"Have you visited the storehouse of the snow?"

"Who has cut channels for the downpour and cleared a passage for the thunderstorm?" (See verses 12-25, N.E.B.)

The poetic beauty of the words spoken from the glory of the divine tempest stirs Job most profoundly.

"Who sired the drops of dew?" (38:28, N.E.B.).

God didn't explain Himself or why Job suffered; He said nothing about the hereafter or the subject under discussion in the debate. He simply revealed His infinite power and goodness by asking pertinent questions, implying His sovereign responsibility to sustain that which He created. Then He left it to Job to think through the questions of his own personal problem.

"Canst thou guide Arcturus with his suns?"

Answer that, Job. Let your dreary pessimism and frustration melt before the vast wonders of outer space. The heavens, inlaid with bright silver, will teach you.

"Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?"

Well, Job, writhing under your double blows of tribulation, what say you to this? Let your flagging spirits be revived by the lurid lightning that only God controls.

"Who can number the clouds . . . ? or who can stay the bottles of heaven?"

Obviously not you, Job; but God can do it. Neither can you weigh the big and little clouds. (Long after Job's day, Soviet scientists claim those puffy clouds that look light as a feather weigh an average of 50,000 tons.) Moreover, Job, you are able to see and feel the rain but only God—not you—can empty the sky bottles.

"Who provideth for the raven his food?"

Can you answer that, Job? Of course you can: God takes care of them. Now you are beginning to see everything in per-

spective. Your epic tragedy is under God's scrutiny; the power and wonder of divine love that watches over all His creatures will not pass you by.

If by using the wings of imagination we could bring Longfellow and Job together, perhaps the poet would complement God's questions by reciting from his "Birds of Killingworth":

"Do you ne'er think what wondrous beings these?

Do you ne'er think who made them, and who taught

The dialect they speak, where melodies

Alone are the interpreters of thought? . . .

Whose habitations in the tree-tops even

Are half-way houses on the road to heaven!"

No fantasy of imagination, however, was needed to remind Ora Smail that the Golden Patina had burnished her difficult but happy life.

She recalled the early years of Imperial Valley when she and her husband homesteaded 160 acres eighteen miles west of El Centro. Ten children were born and reared there.

"Did you have much sickness?" I asked.

"No," she quickly answered with emphasis, "life was too rugged to be sick—and besides that, we couldn't afford the luxury."

As she unfolded her hard life on that ranch I almost concluded a mild case of illness would, by comparison, indeed be a form of luxury. About the nearest to sickness were the cases of childbirth, when she went to a neighbor for help; or a rattlesnake bite on one of the children—which called for a trip to El Centro for medical treatment.

Friends had urged them not to venture into Imperial Valley. They pointed out that its heat would remind them of the fiery place reserved for sinners. But they went anyway and settled on their desert acres. "I mean it *was* desert," she asserted.

A frame house with canvas walls, which rolled up, provided a semblance of protection from winter cold and torrid summer heat. Life on the ranch from beginning to end was, as she stated, "just plain old hard work. Up at four and to bed at ten." Everything had to be done by hand, including shovel work on the irrigation ditches and turning the cream separator.

Fifty cows were milked by hand. All the skim milk—it couldn't be sold—went to the pigs and chickens; only cream had any monetary value.

"What a contrast!" I remarked. "Today skim milk is a valued item. It's my regular table drink."

"Many things are different now," she replied. "Those were hard days but not unhappy. In fact, they were the happiest days of my life."

"What was the hardest thing of all?" I asked.

"Water."

It came in plentiful amounts; the chocolate tide flowed in rivers through Imperial Valley. Chocolate was the word: the rich brown earth kept it that way.

"So muddy," said Ora Smail, "it barely flowed. Everyone put this thick irrigation water in large settling tanks, one for domestic use, the other for cattle."

"Sorrow?" I used the word because a hard life implies suffering; I asked in order to probe a little deeper into her past.

"I never thought about it. There was more happiness than sorrow in my life. I always felt myself happy raising my children on the ranch. They are all alive and healthy today."

Four times during our conversation she repeated the words: "I can honestly say those were the happiest days of my life."

Like the intent of God's questions directed toward Job, the hard unhappy things of life were overshadowed by the positive, encouraging values.

"We endured real hardship," she said, "but I believed the Lord watched over us. I could always depend on Him."

The fame of those who wear the Golden Patina may not be known around the world but they are unsung people of distinction nonetheless. The cardinal question in their minds, in the thinking of Job, and in the thoughts of good men everywhere, remains the same today and forever: "Which is the way to the home of light?" (38:19, N.E.B.).

They who wear the Golden Patina, whose characters bear the sheen of tragedies and hardships overcome by faith, have found the way. He who sired the little dewdrops and binds the mighty Pleiades reveals it.

“Deck Thyself . . . With Majesty”

ESTHER MOTE OF El Centro and Job of Uz had some things in common. They cared about other people and trusted God.

Whether in the administrative office of the public school system, in the church, or among neighbors, Esther wore her burnished Patina gracefully. But she had come by her patina honestly, through what would seem more than her share of life's troubles, though still on a much smaller scale than the patient Uzite.

Reared by Hungarian grandparents from the time she was a very small child, she became restless as a teen-ager and married at the age of seventeen. Her grandparents opposed the marriage; tensions that led to divorce rose within the home after two girls were born. As a consequence of all these and other stresses she developed ulcers and a severe case of allergy. The doctor sent her from Ohio to the desert where, health restored, she and the two daughters began life anew in a new home, a new church, and a new kind of country. Trouble drove her to this place where she found bright new horizons.

Job, too, looked out upon a brave new world when God spoke to him from the spectacular tempest. But before the high point of hearing God speak he had fallen into the depths of a devastating depression. God did not rebuke or reason with the discouraged victim of mountainous troubles. Without elabora-

tion He merely called Job's attention to some of the common, yet striking, occurrences in nature as evidence of a divine concern for His creatures. Job's intelligence was capable of putting three things together: his troubles, God's searching questions, and divine interest in him.

"Knowest thou?" is the beginning of a series of questions asking Job if he can understand the strange ways of animals, much less create them. The wild goats, the unicorn (variously thought to be a bull or a rhinoceros), the horse, and the eagle are among those God cites as evidence of creation's wonders.

The sufferer forgets his troubles and complaints as God questions him. "Hast thou given the horse strength?"

One can presume Job answered in a quite humbled manner: "No, my Lord, I'll have to admit I had nothing to do with it."

Knowing the keen, observing man He was talking to, God called the Uzite's attention to the eagle: "Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?"

"No. I can't do a thing about it."

I can imagine myself in fancy standing there beside the man of Uz, listening to that wonder of wonders: the audible voice of God.

"It's wonderful, Job! God is talking to you. Things can't be so bad if God talks to you."

"No, they can't be. You are right," he says as those piercing brown eyes look upon the marvel of the divine tempest.

I think of quoting the many promises of divine concern, such as, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" and, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee."

Then I think: no it cannot be. Job lived before all these promises were given. He'd never heard of David or Peter. There were no back-up texts to help him, no written word to express the divine mind. That is why God spoke directly to him. But I do not need such direct revelation because I already have these promises in the Word.

I notice the change that has come over Job. No longer does he seem a beaten, dejected man. He glows with undisguised excitement; he is wrapped in profound attention as the miracle of God's speaking continues. Hope is not cut off. New vistas of

life and promise open before his wondering eyes as the sublime Voice again speaks. It came, kind but firm, a mild reprimand.

"Is it for a man who disputes with the Almighty to be stubborn?

Should he that argues with God answer back?" (Job 40: 1, 2, N.E.B.).

Job now sees himself as he really is, and the faultfinder, the contender within him, suddenly ceases to question God's treatment. He had not cursed his Maker as Satan predicted, and he now confesses his wrong. God adds a further rebuke:

"I will ask questions, and you shall answer.

Dare you deny that I am just

or put me in the wrong that you may be right?" (40:7, 8, N.E.B.).

You can be sure Job saw the point and was ready to confess his one real fault. God further challenged him to put on divine attributes, then he would be able to argue on an equal footing:

"Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty." "Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee" (40:10, 14).

Job did not take the challenge. Lowering his eyes, he stood in silence, chastised and humbled, a man who recognized his mistake and was ready to confess it.

God now made reference to some awesome creature: "Behold now behemoth." Some authorities say this mammoth creature was a hippopotamus or an elephant. Others claim it refers to an extinct species, possibly a dinosaur. His massive strength, the size of a powerful tail (verse 17), and being at ease in the water (verse 23) could give credence to the latter theory.

In any case, behemoth represented the "chief of God's works," a powerful reminder that no man—Job, listen to this—could ever make anything as awesome as the creatures God created. It would be far better to wait patiently for God's plans to unroll than to try to question His purpose.

As God spoke, things began to fall into place in Job's mind. He had contended for a great principle—the right of every man to have a fair trial, whatever the form of the investigation. The three so-called comforters prejudged him without

convicting evidence and tried to force a false confession. Let us try to recompose the conversation:

"I will not confess," Job vowed. "I have done nothing to betray God or the human race."

Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar disagreed: "God thinks you're guilty, else why all of this dire punishment?"

"You do not understand God," replied Job. "I am trying to understand."

When a strong man has no feeling of guilt he will not confess. Job's conscience remained clear. "I know nothing," he affirmed. "I will not confess to that which I have not committed. I have committed no crime."

Maybe at this juncture Job looked at the distant mountains and thought of the hardy dwellers who from time immemorial lived in the bleak, rugged canyons. Patiently they toiled up the steep slopes, carrying food and water to their mountain stronghold where it was stored for the day of wrath—either enemies or drought. They lived with trouble and hardship and thus could stand privation better than their enemies. Rare indeed was the ruler who ventured against these tough mountain dwellers without a powerful army.

If Job thought of these people, he no doubt connected their hard lives with his own present misery. Perhaps he may have thought God was now showing him by these searching questions that a divine design was overshadowing him after all. Trouble makes men stronger. Ah, that is it—God intended to make him a better, stronger man! Job lifted his eyes with a new look of hope, resolve, and courage.

Mary Hefner and her son Charles came from the troubles of the Dust Bowl in such fine form that they could wear the Golden Patina with well-fitting grace. After a few years Charles became the head elder of the El Centro church. Mary always walked into church like a refreshing breeze sweeping across the valley at the end of a hot spell in late September.

The family, including six children—Charles was then fifteen—left Oklahoma in 1936 and landed in Imperial Valley with a stripped-down Ford and seventy-five cents. Plenty of work awaited everyone. Charles hired out at one dollar a day,

which included his room and board.

"I wasn't interested in the money," he told me. Only the food attracted him. The fifteen-year-old youth went to work at 4:00 A.M. milking cows; he ate breakfast and then worked all day in the hayfield. He milked again by lantern at night.

"No nap during the day?" I asked.

"Nap? No! Nothing like that. I worked hard all day long," he replied.

But this lush land of plenty, even with the hard work, seemed like an Eden to the hard-bitten family that had passed through the troubles of Job in the Dust Bowl. One year they had planted corn three times, only to see it leveled and buried by dust from the evil wind out of the north.

"It looked like the day of judgment sweeping down upon us," reminisced Mary. "The cattle were starving, so the government paid twelve dollars a head and slaughtered them."

Charles remembers the awful despair of those bleak years. "I knew we were doomed if we stayed there. We hardly had any clothes and we went to bed hungry. You just can't believe how hopeless those days seemed to us."

But his tribulations took on a different texture in California. He tried high school for six weeks but his accent and clothes marked him for ridicule among the other students who had never known such hardships. Those were the heartless "Okie" days in California. It was too much for his sensitive spirit, so he quit school and went to work. One day he worked too hard. He received a back injury that has stayed with him ever since. An operation gave no relief.

Charles Hefner's handsome appearance, his large size, and huge muscles belie the suffering and handicapped health the troublesome back has given him. "Sometimes the pain seems almost unbearable," he once told me. "Yet I have learned how to adjust to it—my work is different, for instance."

So Charles Hefner wears a Golden Patina in El Centro. He has come into happy days as a leader in the church. If anything, pain has added dimensions of grandeur to his life much like it did to Job. Even beauty! Sometimes suffering and beauty go together.

Prayer has not healed his back but there have been many compensating factors and he acknowledges them. He has a good, understanding wife, a comfortable home, a secure job, a talented daughter, a place of honor in the church, and respect in the community.

If we are to recognize real values, committing some of the mysteries of life to the will of God, I would say Charles Hefner really enjoys rich compensations. To my way of thinking he is a great fellow, every inch a man—not as tall as Job, of course, but a good imitation.

As for Job, a line from Shakespeare seems suitable: "They say, best men are moulded out of faults." His faults were very few; but the one that needed refining came out smoothly when God finished His molding.

"Let me be weighed in an even balance," said Job, "that God may know mine integrity" (31:6). God gave him his wish; his record stands bright and clear, like a shining lump of pure gold in the esteem of man and the approbation of Heaven.

The Greatness of the Sage of Uz

THE TEMPERATURE IN El Centro stood at 120 degrees as we drove to the home of Quincy Thomas.

When one steps out of an air-conditioned house into such weather it seems like walking into the hot breath of a volcano. Metal objects become too hot for bare hands to handle. If exposed to direct rays of the summer sun a rattlesnake will die within ten minutes. Some people put an Imperial Valley summer in the same category as the trials and tribulations of Job.

But not so with Quincy and Hazel Thomas. He came to the valley at the age of two. She was born there. They have been away only twice for brief stays and then couldn't wait to get back.

"You really like it here, don't you—even at 120 in the shade?" I asked.

"Oh yes, we love it. The summers get hot but our winters are adorable," answered Mrs. Thomas.

Quincy Thomas, the head deacon of the El Centro Seventh-day Adventist church, always seemed to have the patience of Job; at least, I never caught him off balance. But one time, a 2300-volt starting switch in an ice plant knocked him straight into the hospital. The switch was set in oil; a faulty mechanism caused the fluid to ignite and sear his arm with liquid fire. A month afterward Parkinson's disease set in, but now, thirty-two

years later, it apparently has stopped progressing. He still operates the same switch at the ice plant, and no one but he is allowed to maintain it.

When a block of ice fell on Quincy's head one day, no one at the plant expected him to live long enough to reach the hospital. "God has kept him alive and protected him so many times I believe he is under His special care," said Hazel.

That, too, was how matters stood with Job as he neared the end of his fierce trial at the hands of Satan. Only a few more questions remained for God to ask before the dramatic turnabout took place. Why had it been so long and so severe? Perhaps the case of Quincy Thomas partially explains the troublesome question. His palsy proved to be a kind of blessing in disguise, for it acted as a checkrein upon his temper. Whenever anything excited him the Parkinson's condition flared up.

Men can control their emotions when the resolve or incentive is strong enough, and they have divine help. Also, a handicap can become an advantage. Today at the age of sixty, after suffering from the disease for more than thirty-two years, Quincy lives a relatively normal life and holds down a regular job at the ice plant, besides being very active in the church.

The final interrogation put to Job was about the mighty leviathan. Job was utterly unable to master or even contend with him. Yet God can control the aquatic monster. Implied was a personal question: will He not also control Job's destiny that His purpose might be accomplished?

Leviathan, presumably a whale or a crocodile, is described in highly figurative language in such a way as to highlight Job's impotence before the overwhelming forces that were sometimes arrayed against him. Man needs God, who is far greater than all the adverse forces of the devil who manipulates nature.

God asks Job if leviathan, this terrifying beast, will speak soft words to him. "Will he make a covenant with thee?" The answer is obvious; but by contrast the willingness of God to act in his behalf is beyond question.

A prudent man is always willing to acknowledge his mistakes. This Job did after giving careful thought to the questions God asked him.

"Then Job answered the Lord:
'I know that thou canst do all things,
and that no purpose of thine can
be thwarted.
"Who is this that hides counsel
without knowledge?"
Therefore I have uttered what I
did not understand,
things too wonderful for me,
which I did not know.
"Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you
declare to me."
I had heard of thee by the hearing
of the ear,
but now my eye sees thee;
therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes' " (Job 42:1-6, R.S.V.).

Humbled by the word of God, Job no longer asserts his self-righteousness. Bowing in contrition before his Maker, he demonstrates that perfection of character that brought God's approbation, silenced every critic, turned the tide of battle, sent Satan sprawling in ignominious defeat, and opened the golden gates of heaven to a million dazzling blessings.

The greatness of Job is attested by the scope and significance of his magnificent conquest. Now that the final battle had been won, one triumph after another followed in quick succession. In a vast outpouring of rich rewards, God honored this great man who had patiently endured one of the most grueling tests anyone ever experienced.

Job took the worst that could be thrown against him and survived. His was an accumulation of troubles and temptations usually felt only in the combined lives of a dozen other men. Moreover, he came through this time of supreme agony and despair with only one recorded fault—his tendency to blame someone else while going too far to justify himself—he faulted God. But his final repentance removed the tarnish from his record.

His experience proved what great heights man can reach, what shining victories he can gain over the carnal nature, when there is a supreme resolve and dedication to God's will. Job was subjected not only to the most testing of human assaults, but supernatural powers of demonic fury were hurled at him. He held the line without bending, a heroic figure proudly carrying the colors—torn, bloodspattered, battle-stained, but still flying grandly over the field of honor. It put him among the great luminaries of the ages, an honored place in history's hall of fame.

Not until Christ's struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane would anyone fight such a sweeping battle of dimensions completely out of the ordinary and win so gloriously. Actually Job's contest defined many of the fundamental rights men now enjoy and opened a door of hope to battered, troubled, discouraged human beings.

"His life was gentle; and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up,
And say to all the world, 'This was a man!'"

—SHAKESPEARE, in *Julius Caesar*

Yet greater than any earthly voice or worldly fame was God's approval of Job's performance. Now as the pendulum swings from tears to smiles, Heaven's admiration for the buffeted, triumphant veteran is marked by the step God took to vindicate him.

"The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (42:7).

They were commanded to repent and sacrifice, to apologize to Job lest their folly incur God's wrath. "And my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept." Elihu is not mentioned. Possibly his moderation in attacking Job won him respite from Heaven's displeasure.

The triumph of Job was complete. Rapidly, news of the amazing turn of events spread through Uz and a complete reversal of public opinion set in. Great days lay ahead.

Grace Webster Thomas—she wore the Golden Patina—also found happy days after severe suffering almost prostrated her.

But first came the pleasant years when she and her husband, Dr. Lamar Webster, worked together in public health and then as missionaries. In Mexico she started a government hospital training program for nurses and helped her husband deliver one thousand babies.

Returning to the United States, they settled in Imperial Valley in 1928. During the depression they met the tide of desperate humanity who fled the Dust Bowl. Theirs was the first stop for medical attention in California. Many of these refugees presented a pathetic appearance: hungry, no money, discouraged, and with sick children.

Dr. and Mrs. Webster turned their garage into a first-aid clinic. It was pioneer missionary work of the first magnitude. At one time hundreds of children came down with measles in the migrant camp. Babies were born under quite primitive conditions, and sickness of all types kept the Websters busy almost beyond human endurance. The toll on the health and the bank account of Lamar and Grace was heavy but they kept at their work of mercy.

Not content to follow just one line of work, they started a mission school for Spanish-speaking students at Calexico. They built the school and hired teachers. (The school is now operated by the Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.) Highly missionary motivated, the Websters distributed religious literature by the thousands of pieces, often going from house to house.

Grace gladly assisted her husband, a skilled doctor who had to practice almost every branch of medicine including brain surgery, often without sufficient equipment. But he had a gift of diagnosing and a rare ability to improvise or build gadgets that worked remarkably well.

"He was good at his profession, a wonderful Christian, talented, and a devoted husband," recalls Grace as she speaks of those hard but happy days. "At church he played the piano, led the music, and sometimes preached."

Then like a sudden clap of thunder followed by a torrential storm, tragedy shattered the pleasant scene—just as in Job's day of disaster.

Dr. Webster had ended his sermon in El Centro. A man in the congregation, whose wife was a member, arose and, gun in hand, walked toward the pulpit. This enraged man, a mental case who became insanely jealous whenever his wife took part in any religious activity, showed signs of his illness as he strode down the aisle.

The head elder, sitting on the rostrum, saw him coming and knowing himself to be the prime object of the man's rage, ducked behind a piano. The doctor now came into view as the supreme object of the deranged man's hate. A number of shots were fired. Dr. Webster fell to the floor behind the pulpit, done to death scarcely before members of the horrified congregation could comprehend the meaning of the tragic event.

Reaction in the shocked community was swift and furious. The migrants, especially, who adored the kind doctor, rose up and demanded retribution. A move got under way to lynch the murderer, but this was headed off. Grace Webster pleaded for mercy.

Years passed. Like Job in his day, Grace bore her grief patiently. I knew her in Loma Linda where she did some nursing in the hospital.

Then came a prominent physician, Dr. J. Earl Thomas, to join the medical school staff. His wife died of cancer soon after. Grace did special duty nursing on her case and was impressed by the tenderness of Dr. Thomas for his dying wife.

Later the noted physiologist was baptized into the University Seventh-day Adventist church. Afterwards he asked Grace to marry him.

"God has given me two very good husbands," Grace now says.

So another episode, this one with all the aura of the Golden Patina attached, is added to enhance the meaning of Job's glowing epic.

Moreover, both Grace and Job confirm the grandeur of the declaration voiced by David: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. 30:5).

Even Bildad, that archcritic, stated it correctly: "Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others

grow" (Job 8:19). (Another joy grew out of the good earth of faith and trust for Job—and for Grace.)

Job, the sage of Uz, reflected a divine attribute (extended to Grace) when he said, "I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy" (Job 29:13).

Finally, the whole of a grand and heavenly analogy has endured the test of time: the leviathan chapter (41) of Job—denoting massive strength—includes a line of tender beauty. Sparkling like a diamond in rough ground, this is it: "Sorrow is turned into joy before him" (41:22).

Job discovered it. Grace also found the precious treasure. It belongs to the whole human race of troubled men and women.

The Epilogue of Splendor

"Once in the flight of ages past,
There lived a man:—and who was he?
Mortal! howe'er thy lot be cast,
That man resembled thee."

James Montgomery wrote these lines in "Common Lot." They could apply to Job and all other men. The troubles of the Uzite were an enlarged projection of all human tribulation; the final deliverance suggested God's good purpose toward those who trust Him.

The fortunes of Job took a sudden dramatic turn after God finished talking to him and in consequence of his favorable response. Total victory brought a total change of attitude in those who knew him. Nothing succeeds like success.

"And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10).

Let us imagine the scene one morning in the desert city:

Excitement ran high all over Uz. The wife of a townsman met the wife of a merchant who had just returned from a journey to another city.

"Have you heard the latest news?" she asked, bubbling over with excitement.

"What news?"

"About Job. Why, it's positively astounding!"

"Oh, about Job! Yes, we overheard several camel drivers on the way talking about Job getting rich again, and about some kind of miracle. God talking to him, or something."

"You'd hardly believe it, if you had seen him three months ago," ejaculated the first woman. "He was a sight to behold, but now——."

"Yes, I saw him six or seven months ago," interrupted the second woman. "Everyone shunned him like the plague."

"Why!" exclaimed the first speaker, "even those big men from out of the country who argued against him had to apologize and offer sacrifices before him. God made them do it, mind you. Think of that!"

Big changes indeed had taken place. Scripture says Job's brothers and sisters came running with presents and peace offerings. Old acquaintances again flocked to his house. He forgave them all, and extended to them his characteristic hospitality. It amounted to the most exciting news for many a year in the whole area. The two women could hardly stop talking long enough to attend to their household duties.

"Everyone," added the first woman as they parted, "is falling over himself to catch Job's eye. They are going to make him one of the head men around here once again."

Everything was now coming Job's way in a flood of blessings that more than offset the evil torrent that wrecked his earlier life. It came upon him as a vast cornucopia of plenty.

"Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before; and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.

"So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

"He had also seven sons and three daughters" (42:11-13).

Evidently, as the record suggests, these daughters were among the most remarkable women of the age: "In all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job." Is it a

safe guess that they married noblemen of importance and became influential in the world? To merit such special mention would be a rare thing for women back in those days.

Job's testing and trial served God's beneficent purpose. Now came the grandest time in all his life as God showered upon him the blessings of heaven. Strong to the end, he passed from the midnight of agonizing despair to a glorious midday of opulence and fame. The eternal epic of this great man proves God faithful to His pledge. Those who suffer with Him will also reign with Him.

The triumph of Job marked the emancipation of the human mind. Trouble need not be a tyrant enslaving the human spirit. Neither is man's struggle upward against powerful alien forces an exercise in futility. Job established the fact that God does not forsake a striving man. Such a man can cope with any adversity; he has the right to claim a fair trial, to be judged rightly, not by prejudice, oppression, or falsehood.

Every person may enjoy a spiritual affinity with this man of character. It happens all the time. Take for instance, the Golden Patina of El Centro. We have seen how just a few of the people in one small church suffered and triumphed in a Joblike fashion. Thus it seems valid to assume that what the Uzite stood for is more or less a basic human experience.

The illustrious Sage of Uz once wanted to die. But he patiently hung on to a battered hope, an unshaken confidence in God, until in time the Grand Adjudicator changed his rags of despair to the golden crown and the purple robe.

The book of Job comes to an end with these wonderfully significant lines about this remarkable man:

"After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days."

They were happy days, prosperous, bountiful, the grand climax of a dramatic life honored by God and lauded by man.